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A PHYLLIS OF THE SIERRAS

AND

A DRIFT FROM REDWOOD CAMP

78237

BY

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PHYLLIS OF THE SIERRAS.

Part I.

CHAPTER I.

WHERE the great highway of the Sierras nears the summit, and the pines begin to show sterile reaches of rock and waste in their drawn-up files, there are signs of occasional departures from the main road, as if the weary traveller had at times succumbed to the long ascent, and turned aside for rest and breath again. The tired eyes of many a dusty passenger on the old overland coach have gazed wistfully on those sylvan openings, and imagined recesses of primeval shade and virgin wilderness in their dim perspectives. Had he

descended, however, and followed one of these diverging paths, he would have come upon some rude waggon track, or "log-slide," leading from a clearing on the slope, or the ominous saw-mill, half hidden in the forest it was slowly decimating. The woodland hush might have been broken by the sound of water passing over some unseen dam in the hollow, or the hiss of escaping steam and throb of an invisible engine in the covert.

Such, at least, was the experience of a young fellow of five-and-twenty, who, knapsack on back and stick in hand, had turned aside from the highway and entered the woods one pleasant afternoon in July. But he was evidently a deliberate pedestrian, and not a recent deposit of the proceeding stage-coach; and, although his stout walking-shoes were covered with dust, he had neither the habitual slouch and slovenliness of the tramp, nor the hurried fatigue and growing negligence of an involuntary way-

farer. His clothes, which were strong and serviceable, were better fitted for their present usage than the ordinary garments of the Californian travellers, which were too apt to be either above or below their requirements. But perhaps the stranger's greatest claim to originality was the absence of any weapon in his equipment. He carried neither rifle nor gun in his hand, and his narrow leathern belt was empty of either knife or revolver.

A half-mile from the main road, which seemed to him to have dropped out of sight the moment he had left it, he came upon a half-cleared area, where the hastily cut stumps of pines, of irregular height, bore an odd resemblance to the broken columns of some vast and ruined temple. A few fallen shafts, denuded of their bark and tessellated branches, sawn into symmetrical cylinders, lay beside the stumps, and lent themselves to the illusion. But the freshly cut chips, so damp that they still clung in

layers to each other as they had fallen from the axe, and the stumps themselves, still wet and viscous from their drained life-blood, were redolent of an odour of youth and freshness.

The young man seated himself on one of the logs and deeply inhaled the sharp balsamic fragrance—albeit with a slight cough and a later hurried respiration. This, and a certain drawn look about his upper lip, seemed to indicate, in spite of his strength and colour, some pulmonary weakness. He, however, rose after a moment's rest with undiminished energy and cheerfulness, readjusted his knapsack, and began to lightly pick his way across the fallen timber. A few paces on, the muffled whirr of machinery became more audible, with the lazy, monotonous command of "Gee thar," from some unseen ox-driver. Presently, the slow, deliberately swaying heads of a team of oxen emerged from the bushes, followed by the clanking chain of the

"skids" of sawn planks, which they were ponderously dragging, with that ostentatious submissiveness peculiar to their species. They had nearly passed him when there was a sudden hitch in the procession. From where he stood he could see that a projecting plank had struck a pile of chips and become partly imbedded in it. To run to the obstruction and, with a few dexterous strokes and the leverage of his stout stick, dislodge the plank was the work, not only of the moment, but of an evidently energetic hand. The teamster looked back and merely nodded his appreciation, and with a "Gee up! Out of that, now!" the skids moved on.

"Much obliged, there!" said a hearty voice, as if supplementing the teamster's imperfect acknowledgment.

The stranger looked up. The voice came from the open, sashless, shutterless window of a rude building—a mere shell of boards and beams half hidden in the still leafy

covert before him. He had completely overlooked it in his approach, even as he had ignored the nearer throbbing of the machinery, which was so violent as to impart a decided tremor to the slight edifice, and to shake the speaker so strongly that he was obliged while speaking to steady himself by the sashless frame of the window at which he stood. He had a face of good-natured and alert intelligence, a master's independence and authority of manner, in spite of his blue jean overalls and flannel shirt.

"Don't mention it," said the traveller, smiling with equal but more deliberate good-humour. Then, seeing that his interlocutor still lingered a hospitable moment in spite of his quick eyes and the jarring impatience of the machinery, he added hesitatingly, "I fancy I've wandered off the track a bit. Do you know a Mr. Bradley —somewhere here?"

His hesitation seemed to be more from

some habitual conscientiousness of statement than awkwardness. The man in the window replied, "I'm Bradley."

"Ah! Thank you: I've a letter for you —somewhere. Here it is." He produced a note from his breast-pocket. Bradley stooped to a sitting posture in the window. "Pitch it up." It was thrown and caught cleverly. Bradley opened it, read it hastily, smiled and nodded, glanced behind him as if to implore further delay from the impatient machinery, leaned perilously from the window, and said:

"Look here! Do you see that silver-fir straight ahead?"

"Yes."

"A little to the left there's a trail. Follow it and skirt along the edge of the canyon until you see my house. Ask for my wife—that's Mrs. Bradley—and give her your letter. Stop!" He drew a carpenter's pencil from his pocket, scrawled two or three words across the open sheet,

and tossed it back to the stranger. "See you at tea! Excuse me, Mr. Mainwaring;—we're short-handed—and—the engine——" But here he disappeared suddenly.

Without glancing at the note again, the stranger quietly replaced it in his pocket, and struck out across the fallen trunks towards the silver-fir. He quickly found the trail indicated by Bradley, although it was faint and apparently worn by a single pair of feet as a shorter and private cut from some more travelled path. It was well for the stranger that he had a keen eye or he would have lost it; it was equally fortunate that he had a mountaineering instinct, for a sudden profound deepening of the blue mist seen dimly through the leaves before him caused him to slacken his steps. The trail bent abruptly to the right; a gulf fully two thousand feet deep was at his feet! It was the Great Canyon.

At the first glance it seemed so narrow that a rifle-shot could have crossed its

tranquil depths; but a second look at the comparative size of the trees on the opposite mountain convinced him of his error. A nearer survey of the abyss also showed him that, instead of its walls being perpendicular, they were made of successive ledges or terraces to the valley below. Yet the air was so still, and the outlines so clearly cut, that they might have been only the reflections of the mountains around him cast upon the placid mirror of a lake. The spectacle arrested him, as it arrested all men, by some occult power beyond the mere attraction of beauty or magnitude; even the teamster never passed it without the tribute of a stone or broken twig tossed into its immeasurable profundity.

Reluctantly leaving the spot, the stranger turned with the trail that now began to skirt its edge. This was no easy matter, as the undergrowth was very thick, and the foliage dense, to the perilous brink of

the precipice. He walked on, however, wondering why Bradley had chosen so circuitous and dangerous a route to his house, which naturally would be some distance back from the canyon. At the end of ten minutes' struggling through the "brush," the trail became vague, and, to all appearance, ended. Had he arrived? The thicket was as dense as before; through the interstices of leaf and spray he could see the blue void of the canyon at his side, and he even fancied that the foliage ahead of him was more symmetrical and less irregular, and was touched here and there with faint bits of colour. To complete his utter mystification, a woman's voice, very fresh, very youthful, and by no means unmusical, rose apparently from the circumambient air. He looked hurriedly to the right and left, and even hopelessly into the trees above him.

"Yes," said the voice, as if renewing a suspended conversation; "it was too

funny for anything. There were the two Missouri girls from Skinner's, with their auburn hair ringleted, my dear, like the old 'Books of Beauty'—in white frocks and sashes of an unripe greenish yellow, that puckered up your mouth like persimmons. One of them was speechless from good behaviour, and the other—well! the other was so energetic she called out the figures before the fiddler did, and shrieked to my *vis-à-vis* to dance up to the entire stranger—meaning *me*, if you please."

The voice appeared to come from the foliage that overhung the canyon, and the stranger even fancied he could detect through the shimmering leafy veil something that moved monotonously to and fro. Mystified and impatient, he made a hurried stride forward, his foot struck a wooden step, and the next moment the mystery was made clear. He had almost stumbled upon the end of a long veranda

that projected over the abyss, before a low, modern dwelling, till then invisible, nestling on its very brink. The symmetrically trimmed foliage he had noticed were the luxuriant Madeira vines that hid the rude pillars of the veranda; the moving object was a rocking-chair, with its back towards the intruder, that disclosed only the brown hair above, and the white skirts and small slippered feet below, of a seated female figure. In the meantime, a second voice from the interior of the house had replied to the figure in the chair, who was evidently the first speaker:

"It must have been very funny; but as long as Jim is always bringing somebody over from the mill, I don't see how *I* can go to those places. You were lucky, my dear, to escape from the new Division Superintendent last night. He was insufferable to Jim, with his talk of his friend the San Francisco millionaire, and

to me with his cheap society airs. I do hate a provincial fine gentleman."

The situation was becoming embarrassing to the intruder. At the apparition of the woman, the unaffected and simple directness he had previously shown in his equally abrupt contact with Bradley had fled utterly. Confused by the awkwardness of his arrival, and shocked at the idea of overhearing a private conversation, he stepped hurriedly on the veranda.

"Well? Go on!" said the second voice impatiently. "Well, who else was there? *What* did you say? I don't hear you. What's the matter?"

The seated figure had risen from her chair, and turned a young and pretty face somewhat superciliously towards the stranger, as she said in a low tone to her unseen auditor, "Hush! there is somebody here!"

The young man came forward with an awkwardness that was more boyish

than rustic. His embarrassment was not lessened by the simultaneous entrance from the open door of a second woman, apparently as young as and prettier than the first.

"I trust you'll excuse me for—for—being so wretchedly stupid," he stammered, "but I really thought, you know, that—that—I was following the trail to—to—the front of the house, when I stumbled in—in here."

Long before he had finished both women, by some simple feminine intuition, were relieved, and even prepossessed, by his voice and manner. They smiled graciously. The later comer pointed to the empty chair. But, with his habit of pertinacious conscientiousness, the stranger continued: "It was regularly stupid, wasn't it?—and I ought to have known better. I should have turned back and gone away when I found out what an ass I was likely to be; but I was—afraid—you know, of alarming you by the noise."

"Won't you sit down?" said the second lady pleasantly.

"Oh, thanks. I've a letter here—I——" He transferred his stick and hat to his left hand as he felt in his breast-pocket with his right. But the action was so awkward that the stick dropped on the veranda. Both women made a movement to restore it to its embarrassed owner, who, however, quickly anticipated them. "Pray don't mind it," he continued, with accelerated breath and heightened colour. "Ah, here's the letter!" He produced the letter Bradley had returned to him. "It's mine, in fact—that is, I brought it to Mr. Bradley. He said I was to give it to—to—to—Mrs. Bradley." He paused, glancing embarrassedly from the one to the other.

"I'm Mrs. Bradley," said the prettiest one, with a laugh. He handed her the letter. It ran as follows:

"DEAR BRADLEY,—Put Mr. Mainwaring through as far as he wants to go, or hang him up at The Lookout, just as he likes. The Bank's behind him, and his hat's chalked all over the Road. But he don't care much about being on velvet. That ain't his style—and you'll like him. He's somebody's son in England.

"B."

Mrs. Bradley glanced simply at the first sentence. "Pray sit down, Mr. Mainwaring," she said gently; "or, rather, let me first introduce my cousin—Miss Macy."

"Thanks," said Mainwaring, with a bow to Miss Macy, "but I—I—I—think," he added conscientiously, "you did not notice that your husband had written something across the paper."

Mrs. Bradley smiled, and glanced at her husband's endorsement—"All right. Wade in." "It's nothing but Jim's slang," she said, with a laugh and a slightly heightened

colour. "He ought not to have sent you by that short cut; it's a bother, and even dangerous for a stranger. If you had come directly to *us* by the road, without making your first call at the mill," she added, with a touch of coquetry, "you would have had a pleasanter walk, and seen *us* sooner. I suppose, however, you got off the stage at the mill?"

"I was not on the coach," said Mainwaring, unfastening the strap of his knapsack. "I walked over from Lone Pine Flat."

"Walked!" echoed both women in simultaneous astonishment.

"Yes," returned Mainwaring simply, laying aside his burden and taking the proffered seat. "It's a very fine bit of country."

"Why, it's fifteen miles," said Mrs. Bradley, glancing horror-stricken at her cousin. "How dreadful! And to think Jim could have sent you a horse to Lone Pine. Why, you must be dead!"

"Thanks, I'm all right! I rather enjoyed it, you know."

"But," said Miss Macy, glancing wonderingly at his knapsack, "you must want something, a change—or some refreshment—after fifteen miles."

"Pray don't disturb yourself," said Mainwaring, rising hastily, but not quickly enough to prevent the young girl from slipping past him into the house, whence she rapidly returned with a decanter and glasses.

"Perhaps Mr. Mainwaring would prefer to go into Jim's room and wash his hands and put on a pair of slippers?" said Mrs. Bradley, with gentle concern.

"Thanks, no. I really am not tired. I sent some luggage yesterday by the coach to the Summit Hotel," he said, observing the women's eyes still fixed upon his knapsack. "I dare say I can get them if I want them. I've got a change here," he continued, lifting the knapsack as if with a

sudden sense of its incongruity with its surroundings, and depositing it on the end of the veranda.

"Do let it remain where it is," said Mrs. Bradley, greatly amused, "and pray sit still and take some refreshment. You'll make yourself ill after your exertions," she added, with a charming assumption of matronly solicitude.

"But I'm not at all deserving of your sympathy," said Mainwaring, with a laugh. "I'm awfully fond of walking, and my usual constitutional isn't much under this."

"Perhaps you were stronger than you are now," said Mrs. Bradley, gazing at him with a frank curiosity that, however, brought a faint deepening of colour to his cheek.

"I dare say you're right," he said suddenly, with an apologetic smile. "I quite forgot that I'm a sort of an invalid, you know, travelling for my health. I'm not very strong here," he added, lightly tapping his chest, that now, relieved of the bands

of his knapsack, appeared somewhat thin and hollow in spite of his broad shoulders. His voice, too, had become less clear and distinct.

Mrs. Bradley, who was still watching him, here rose potentially. "You ought to take more care of yourself," she said. "You should begin by eating this biscuit, drinking that glass of whisky, and making yourself more comfortable in Jim's room until we can get the spare room fixed a little."

"But I am not to be sent to bed—am I?" asked Mainwaring, in half-real, half-amused consternation.

"I'm not so sure of that," said Mrs. Bradley, with playful precision. "But for the present we'll let you off with a good wash and a nap afterwards in that rocking-chair, while my cousin and I make some little domestic preparations. You see," she added with a certain proud humility, "we've got only one servant—a Chinaman, and

there are many things we can't leave to him."

The colour again rose in Mainwaring's cheek, but he had tact enough to reflect that any protest or hesitation on his part at that moment would only increase the difficulties of his gentle entertainers. He allowed himself to be ushered into the house by Mrs. Bradley, and shown to her husband's room, without perceiving that Miss Macy had availed herself of his absence to run to the end of the veranda, mischievously try to lift the discarded knapsack to her own pretty shoulder, but, failing, heroically stagger with it into the passage and softly deposit it at his door. This done, she pantingly rejoined her cousin in the kitchen.

"Well," said Mrs. Bradley emphatically. "*Did* you ever? Walking fifteen miles for pleasure—and with such lungs!"

"And that knapsack!" added Louise Macy, pointing to the mark in her little

palm where the strap had imbedded itself in the soft flesh.

"He's nice, though; isn't he?" said Mrs. Bradley tentatively.

"Yes," said Miss Macy; "he isn't, certainly, one of those provincial fine gentlemen you object to. But *did* you see his shoes? I suppose they make the miles go quickly, or seem to measure less by comparison."

"They're probably more serviceable than those high-heeled things that Captain Greyson hops about in."

"But the Captain always rides—and rides very well—you know," said Louise reflectively. There was a moment's pause.

"I suppose Jim will tell us all about him," said Mrs. Bradley, dismissing the subject, as she turned her sleeves back over her white arms, preparatory to grappling certain culinary difficulties.

"Jim," observed Miss Macy shortly, "in

my opinion, knows nothing more than his note says. That's like Jim."

"There's nothing more to know, really," said Mrs. Bradley, with a superior air. "He's undoubtedly the son of some Englishman of fortune, sent out here for his health."

"Hush!"

Miss Macy had heard a step in the passage. It halted at last, half irresolutely, before the open door of the kitchen, and the stranger appeared with an embarrassed air. But in his brief absence he seemed to have completely groomed himself, and stood there, the impersonation of close-cropped, clean, and wholesome English young manhood. The two women appreciated it with cat-like fastidiousness.

"I beg your pardon; but really you're going to let a fellow do something for you," he said, "just to keep him from looking like a fool. I really can do no end of things, you know, if you'll try me. I've

done some camping-out, and can cook as well as the next man."

The two women made a movement of smiling remonstrance, half coquettish, and half superior, until Mrs. Bradley, becoming conscious of her bare arms and the stranger's wandering eyes, coloured faintly, and said with more decision:

"Certainly not. You'd only be in the way. Besides, you need rest more than we do. Put yourself in the rocking-chair, in the veranda, and go to sleep until Mr. Bradley comes."

Mainwaring saw that she was serious, and withdrew, a little ashamed at the familiarity into which his boyishness had betrayed him. But he had scarcely seated himself in the rocking-chair before Miss Macy appeared, carrying with both hands a large tin basin of unshelled peas.

"There," she said pantingly, placing her burden in his lap, "if you really want to help, there's something to do that isn't

very fatiguing. You may shell these peas."

"*Shell* them—I beg pardon, but how?" he asked, with smiling earnestness.

"How? Why, I'll show you—look."

She frankly stepped beside him, so close that her full-skirted dress half encompassed him and the basin in a delicious confusion, and, leaning over his lap, with her left hand picked up a pea-cod, which, with a single movement of her charming little right thumb, she broke at the end, and stripped the green shallow of its tiny treasures.

He watched her with smiling eyes; her own, looking down on him, were very bright and luminous. "There; that's easy enough," she said, and turned away.

"But—one moment, Miss—Miss——?"

"Macy," said Louise.

"Where am I to put the shells?"

"Oh! throw them down there—there's room enough."

She was pointing to the canyon below. The veranda actually projected over its brink, and seemed to hang in mid-air above it. Mainwaring almost mechanically threw his arm out to catch the incautious girl, who had stepped heedlessly to its extreme edge.

"How odd! Don't you find it rather dangerous here?" he could not help saying. "I mean—you might have had a railing that wouldn't intercept the view and yet be safe?"

"It's a fancy of Mr. Bradley's," returned the young girl carelessly. "It's all like this. The house was built on a ledge against the side of the precipice, and the road suddenly drops down to it."

"It's tremendously pretty, all the same, you know," said the young man thoughtfully, gazing, however, at the girl's rounded chin above him.

"Yes," she replied curtly. "But this isn't working. I must go back to Jenny.

You can shell the peas until Mr. Bradley comes home. He won't be long."

She turned away, and re-entered the house. Without knowing why, he thought her withdrawal abrupt, and he was again feeling his ready colour rise with the suspicion of either having been betrayed by the young girl's innocent fearlessness into some unpardonable familiarity, which she had quietly resented, or of feeling an ease and freedom in the company of these two women that were inconsistent with respect, and should be restrained.

He, however, began to apply himself to the task given to him with his usual conscientiousness of duty, and presently acquired a certain manual dexterity in the operation. It was "good fun" to throw the cast-off husks into the mighty unfathomable void before him and watch them linger with suspended gravity in mid-air for a moment —apparently motionless—until they either lost themselves, a mere vanishing black

spot in the thin ether, or slid suddenly at a sharp angle into unknown shadow. How deuced odd for him to be sitting here in this fashion! It would be something to talk of hereafter, and yet—he stopped—it was not at all in the line of that characteristic adventure, uncivilized novelty, and barbarous freedom which for the last month he had sought and experienced. It was not at all like his meeting with the grizzly last week while wandering in a lonely canyon; not a bit in the line of his chance acquaintance with that notorious ruffian, Spanish Jack, or his witnessing with his own eyes that actual lynching affair at Angels. No! Nor was it at all characteristic, according to his previous ideas of frontier rural seclusion—as for instance the Pike County cabin of the family where he stayed one night, and where the handsome daughter asked him what his Christian name was. No! These two young women were very unlike her; they seemed really quite the

equals of his family and friends in England —perhaps more attractive—and yet, yes it was this very attractiveness that alarmed his inbred social conservatism regarding women. With a man it was very different; that alert, active, intelligent husband, instinct with the throbbing life of his saw-mill, creator and worker in one, challenged his unqualified trust and admiration.

He had become conscious for the last minute or two of thinking rapidly and becoming feverishly excited; of breathing with greater difficulty, and a renewed tendency to cough. The tendency increased until he instinctively put aside the pan from his lap and half rose. But even that slight exertion brought on an accession of coughing. He put his handkerchief to his lips, partly to keep the sound from disturbing the women in the kitchen, partly because of a certain significant taste in his mouth which he unpleasantly remembered. When

he removed the handkerchief it was, as he expected, spotted with blood. He turned quickly and re-entered the house softly, regaining the bedroom without attracting attention. An increasing faintness here obliged him to lie down on the bed until it should pass.

Everything was quiet. He hoped they would not discover his absence from the veranda until he was better; it was deucedly awkward that he should have had this attack just now—and after he had made so light of his previous exertions. They would think him an effeminate fraud, these two bright, active women and that alert, energetic man. A faint colour came into his cheek at the idea, and an uneasy sense that he had been in some way foolishly imprudent about his health. Again, they might be alarmed at missing him from the veranda; perhaps he had better have remained there; perhaps he ought to tell them that he had concluded to take their

advice and lie down. He tried to rise, but the deep blue chasm before the window seemed to be swelling up to meet him, the bed slowly sinking into its oblivious profundity. He knew no more.

He came to with the smell and taste of some powerful volatile spirit, and the vague vision of Mr. Bradley still standing at the window of the mill and vibrating with the machinery; this changed presently to a pleasant lassitude and lazy curiosity as he perceived Mr. Bradley smile and apparently slip from the window of the mill to his bedside.

"You're all right now," said Bradley cheerfully.

He was feeling Mainwaring's pulse. Had he really been ill, and was Bradley a doctor?

Bradley evidently saw what was passing in his mind. "Don't be alarmed," he said gaily. "I'm not a doctor, but I practise a little medicine and surgery on account of

the men at the mill, and accidents, you know. You're all right now; you've lost a little blood; but in a couple of weeks in this air we'll have that tubercle healed, and you'll be as right as a trivet."

"In a couple of weeks!" echoed Mainwaring, in faint astonishment. "Why, I leave here to-morrow."

"You'll do nothing of the kind," said Mrs. Bradley, with smiling peremptoriness, suddenly slipping out from behind her husband. "Everything is all perfectly arranged. Jim has sent off messengers to your friends, so that if you can't come to them they can come to you. You see, you can't help yourself! If you *will* walk fifteen miles with such lungs, and then frighten people to death, you must abide by the consequences."

"You see, the old lady has fixed you," said Bradley, smiling, "and she's the master here. Come, Mainwaring, you can send any other message you like, and have

who and what you want here; but *here* you must stop for awhile."

"But did I frighten you really?" stammered Mainwaring faintly, to Mrs. Bradley.

"Frighten us!" said Mrs. Bradley. "Well, look there!"

She pointed to the window which commanded a view of the veranda. Miss Macy had dropped into the vacant chair, with her little feet stretched out before her, her cheeks burning with heat and fire, her eyes partly closed, her straw hat hanging by a ribbon round her neck, her brown hair clinging to her ears and forehead in damp tendrils, and an enormous palm-leaf fan in each hand violently playing upon this charming picture of exhaustion and abandonment.

"She came tearing down to the mill, barebacked on our half-broken mustang, about half an hour ago, to call me 'to help you,'" explained Bradley. "Heaven knows how she managed to do it!"

CHAPTER II.

THE medication of the woods was not over-estimated by Bradley. There was surely some occult healing property in that vast reservoir of balmy and resinous odours over which The Lookout beetled and clung, and from which at times the pure exhalations of the terraced valley seemed to rise. Under its remedial influence and a conscientious adherence to the rules of absolute rest and repose laid down for him, Mainwaring had no return of the hæmorrhage. The nearest professional medical authority, hastily summoned, saw no reason for changing or for supplementing Bradley's intelligent and simple treatment, although astounded that the patient had been under no more radical or systematic cure than

travel and exercise. The women especially were amazed that Mainwaring had taken "nothing for it," in their habitual experience of an unfettered pill-and-elixir consuming democracy. In their knowledge of the thousand "panaceas" that filled the shelves of the General Store, this singular abstention of their guest seemed to indicate a national peculiarity.

His bed was moved beside the low window, from which he could not only view the veranda, but converse at times with its occupants, and even listen to the book which Miss Macy, seated without, read aloud to him. In the evening, Bradley would linger by his couch until late, beguiling the tedium of his convalescence with characteristic stories and information which he thought might please the invalid. For Mainwaring, who had been early struck with Bradley's ready and cultivated intelligence, ended by shyly avoiding the discussion of more serious

topics, partly because Bradley impressed him with a suspicion of his own inferiority, and partly because Mainwaring questioned the taste of Bradley's apparent exhibition of his manifest superiority. He learned accidentally that this millowner and backwoodsman was a college-bred man; but the practical application of that education to the ordinary affairs of life was new to the young Englishman's traditions, and grated a little harshly on his feelings. He would have been quite content if Bradley had, like himself and fellows he knew, undervalued his training, and kept his gifts conservatively impractical. The knowledge also that his host's education naturally came from some provincial institution unlike Oxford and Cambridge, may have unconsciously affected his general estimate. I say unconsciously, for his strict conscientiousness would have rejected any such formal proposition.

Another trifle annoyed him. He could

not help noticing also that, although Bradley's manner and sympathy were confidential and almost brotherly, he never made any allusion to Mainwaring's own family or connections, and, in fact, gave no indication of what he believed was the national curiosity in regard to strangers. Somewhat embarrassed by this indifference, Mainwaring made the occasion of writing some letters home an opportunity for laughingly alluding to the fact that he had made his mother and his sisters fully aware of the great debt they owed the household of The Lookout.

"They'll probably all send you a round robin of thanks, except, perhaps, my next brother, Bob." Bradley contented himself with a gesture of general deprecation, and did not ask *why* Mainwaring's young brother should contemplate his death with satisfaction. Nevertheless, some time afterwards Miss Macy remarked that it seemed hard that the happiness of one member of

a family should depend upon a calamity to another. "As for instance?" asked Mainwaring, who had already forgotten the circumstance. "Why, if you had died, and your younger brother succeeded to the baronetcy, and become Sir Robert Mainwaring," responded Miss Macy, with precision. This was the first and only allusion to his family and prospective rank. On the other hand he had—through naïve and boyish inquiries, which seemed to amuse his entertainers—acquired, as he believed, a full knowledge of the history and antecedents of the Bradley household. He knew how Bradley had brought his young wife and her cousin to California, and abandoned a lucrative law practice in San Francisco to take possession of this mountain mill and woodland, which he had acquired through some professional service.

"Then you are a barrister really?" said Mainwaring gravely

Bradley laughed. "I'm afraid I've had more practice—though not as lucrative a one—as surgeon or doctor."

"But you're regularly on the rolls, you know; you're entered as counsel, and all that sort of thing?" continued Mainwaring, with great seriousness.

"Well, yes," replied Bradley, much amused. "I'm afraid I must plead guilty to that."

"It's not a bad sort of thing," said Mainwaring naïvely, ignoring Bradley's amusement. "I've got a cousin who's gone in for the law. Got out of the army to do it—too. He's a sharp fellow."

"Then you *do* allow a man to try many trades—over there," said Miss Macy demurely.

"Yes, sometimes," said Mainwaring graciously, but by no means certain that the case was at all analogous.

Nevertheless, as if relieved of certain doubts of the conventional quality of his

host's attainments, he now gave himself up to a very hearty and honest admiration of Bradley. "You know it's awfully kind of him to talk to a fellow like me, who just pulled through, and never got any prizes at Oxford, and don't understand the half of these things," he remarked confidentially to Mrs. Bradley. "He knows more about the things we used to go in for at Oxford than lots of our men, and he's never been there. He's uncommonly clever."

"Jim was always very brilliant," returned Mrs. Bradley indifferently, and with more than even conventionally polite wifely deprecation; "I wish he were more practical."

"Practical! Oh, I say, Mrs. Bradley! Why, a fellow that can go in among a lot of workmen and tell them just what to do —an all-round chap that can be independent of his valet, his doctor, and his—banker! By Jove—*that's* practical!"

"I mean," said Mrs. Bradley coldly,

"that there are some things that a gentleman ought not to be practical about nor independent of. Mr. Bradley would have done better to have used his talents in some more legitimate and established way."

Mainwaring looked at her in genuine surprise. To his inexperienced observation Bradley's intelligent energy and, above all, his originality, ought to have been priceless in the eyes of his wife—the American female of his species. He felt that slight shock which most loyal or logical men feel when first brought face to face with the easy disloyalty and incomprehensible logic of the feminine affections. Here was a fellow, by Jove, that any woman ought to be proud of, and—and—he stopped blankly. He wondered if Miss Macy sympathized with her cousin.

Howbeit, this did not affect the charm of their idyllic life at The Lookout. The precipice over which they hung was as

charming as ever in its poetic illusions of space and depth and colour; the isolation of their comfortable existence in the tasteful yet audacious habitation, the pleasant routine of daily tasks and amusements, all tended to make the enforced quiet and inaction of his convalescence a lazy recreation. He was really improving; more than that, he was conscious of a certain satisfaction in this passive observation of novelty that was healthier and perhaps *truer* than his previous passion for adventure and that febrile desire for change and excitement which he now felt was a part of his disease. Nor were incident and variety entirely absent from this tranquil experience. He was one day astonished at being presented by Bradley with copies of the latest English newspapers, procured from Sacramento, and he equally astonished his host, after profusely thanking him, by only listlessly glancing at their columns. He estopped a proposed visit from one of his influential

countrymen; in the absence of his fair entertainers at their domestic duties, he extracted infinite satisfaction from Foo-Yup, the Chinese servant, who was particularly detached for his service. From his invalid coign of vantage at the window he was observant of all that passed upon the veranda, that al fresco audience-room of The Lookout, and he was good-humouredly conscious that a great many eccentric and peculiar visitors were invariably dragged thither by Miss Macy, and goaded into characteristic exhibition within sight and hearing of her guest, with a too evident view, under the ostentatious excuse of extending his knowledge of national character, of mischievously shocking him. "When you are strong enough to stand Captain Gashweiler's opinions of the Established Church and Chinamen," said Miss Macy, after one of those revelations, "I'll get Jim to bring him here, for really he swears so outrageously that even in the broadest in-

terests of international understanding and goodwill neither Mrs. Bradley nor myself could be present."

On another occasion she provokingly lingered before his window for a moment with a rifle slung jauntily over her shoulder. "If you hear a shot or two don't excite yourself, and believe we're having a lynching case in the woods. It will be only me. There's some creature—confess, you expected me to say 'critter'—hanging round the barn. It may be a bear. Good-bye." She missed the creature—which happened to be really a bear—much to Mainwaring's illogical satisfaction. "I wonder why," he reflected, with vague uneasiness, "she doesn't leave all that sort of thing to girls like that tow-headed girl at the blacksmith's."

It chanced, however, that this blacksmith's tow-headed daughter, who, it may be incidentally remarked, had the additional eccentricities of large black eyes and large

white teeth, came to the fore in quite another fashion. It was when, Mainwaring being able to leave his room and join the family board, Mrs. Bradley found it necessary to enlarge her domestic service, and arranged with their nearest neighbour, the blacksmith, to allow his daughter to come to The Lookout for a few days to "do the chores" and assist in the housekeeping, as she had on previous occasions. The day of her advent Bradley entered Mainwaring's room, and, closing the door mysteriously, fixed his blue eyes, kindling with mischief, on the young Englishman.

"You are aware, my dear boy," he began with affected gravity, "that you are now living in a land of liberty, where mere artificial distinctions are not known, and where Freedom from her mountain heights generally levels all social positions. I think you have graciously admitted that fact."

"I know I've been taking a tremendous lot of freedom with you and yours, old man,

and it's a deuced shame," interrupted Mainwaring, with a faint smile.

"And that nowhere," continued Bradley, with immovable features, "does equality exist as perfectly as above yonder unfathomable abyss, where you have also, doubtless, observed the American eagle proudly soars and screams defiance."

"Then that was the fellow that kept me awake this morning, and made me wonder if I was strong enough to hold a gun again."

"That wouldn't have settled the matter," continued Bradley imperturbably. "The case is simply this: Miss Minty Sharpe, that blacksmith's daughter, has once or twice consented, for a slight emolument, to assist in our domestic service for a day or two, and she comes back again to-day. Now, under the ægis of that noble bird whom your national instincts tempt you to destroy, she has on all previous occasions taken her meals with us, at the same

table, on terms of perfect equality. She will naturally expect to do the same now. Mrs. Bradley thought it proper, therefore, to warn you, that, in case your health was not quite equal to this democratic simplicity, you could still dine in your room."

"It would be great fun—if Miss Sharpe won't object to my presence."

"But it must not be 'great fun,'" returned Bradley, more seriously; "for Miss Minty's perception of humour is probably as keen as yours, and she would be quick to notice it. And, so far from having any objection to you, I am inclined to think that we owe her consent to come to her desire of making your acquaintance."

"She will find my conduct most exemplary," said Mainwaring earnestly.

"Let us hope so," concluded Bradley, with unabated gravity. "And, now that you have consented, let me add, from my own experience, that Miss Minty's lemon-pies alone are worthy of any concession."

The dinner-hour came. Mainwaring, a little pale and interesting, leaning on the arm of Bradley, crossed the hall, and for the first time entered the dining-room of the house where he had lodged for three weeks. It was a bright, cheerful apartment, giving upon the laurels of the rocky hill-side, and permeated, like the rest of the house, with the wholesome spice of the valley—an odour that, in its pure desiccating property, seemed to obliterate all flavour of alien human habitation, and even to dominate and etherealize the appetizing smell of the viands before them. The bare, shining, planed, boarded walls appeared to resent any decoration that might have savoured of dust, decay, or moisture. The four large windows and long, open door, set in scanty strips of the plainest, spotless muslin, framed in themselves pictures of woods and rock and sky of limitless depth, colour, and distance, that made all other adornment impertinent. Nature, invading the room at

every opening, had banished Art from those neutral walls.

"It's like a picnic, with comfort," said Mainwaring, glancing round him with boyish appreciation. Miss Minty was not yet there; the Chinaman was alone in attendance. Mainwaring could not help whispering, half mischievously, to Louise, "You draw the line at Chinamen, I suppose?"

"*We* don't, but *he* does," answered the young girl. "He considers us his social inferiors. But—hush!"

Minty Sharpe had just entered the room, and was advancing with smiling confidence towards the table. Mainwaring was a little startled; he had seen Minty in a holland sun-bonnet and turned-up skirt crossing the veranda only a moment before; in the brief instant between the dishing-up of dinner and its actual announcement she had managed to change her dress, put on a clean collar, cuffs, and a large jet brooch, and apply some odorous unguent to her re-

bellious hair. Her face, guiltless of powder or cold cream, was still shining with the healthy perspiration of her last labours as she promptly took the vacant chair beside Mainwaring.

"Don't mind me, folks," she said cheerfully, resting her plump elbow on the table, and addressing the company generally, but gazing with frank curiosity into the face of the young man at her side. "It was a keen jump, I tell yer, to get out of my old duds inter these, and look decent inside o' five minutes. But I reckon I aint kept yer waitin' long—least of all this yer sick stranger. But you're looking pearter than you did. You're wonderin' like ez not where I ever saw ye before?" she continued, laughing. "Well, I'll tell you. Last week! I'd kem over yer on a chance of seein' Jenny Bradley, and while I was meanderin' down the veranda I saw you lyin' back in your chair by the window drowned in sleep, like a baby. Lordy! I

mout hev won a pair o' gloves, but I reckoned you were Loo's game, and not mine."

The slightly constrained laugh which went round the table after Miss Minty's speech was due quite as much to the faint flush that had accented Mainwaring's own smile as to the embarrassing remark itself. Mrs. Bradley and Miss Macy exchanged rapid glances. Bradley, who alone retained his composure, with a slight flicker of amusement in the corner of his eye and nostril, said quickly: "You see, Mainwaring, how Nature stands ready to help your convalescence at every turn. If Miss Minty had only followed up her healing opportunity, your cure would have been complete."

"Ye mout hev left some o' that pretty talk for *him* to say," said Minty, taking up her knife and fork with a slight shrug, "and you needn't call me *Miss* Minty either, jest because there's kempeny present."

"I hope you won't look upon me as company, Minty, or I shall be obliged to call you 'Miss' too," said Mainwaring, unexpectedly regaining his usual frankness.

Bradley's face brightened; Miss Minty raised her black eyes from her plate with still broader appreciation.

"There's nothin' mean about that," she said, showing her white teeth. "Well, what's *your* first name?"

"Not as pretty as yours, I'm afraid. It's Frank."

"No, it aint, it's Francis! You reckon to be Sir Francis some day," she said gravely. "You can't play any Frank off on me; you wouldn't do it on *her*," she added, indicating Louise with her elbow.

A momentous silence followed. The particular form that Minty's vulgarity had taken had not been anticipated by the two other women. They had not unreasonably expected some original audacity or

gaucherie from the blacksmith's daughter, which might astonish yet amuse their guest, and condone for the situation forced upon them. But they were not prepared for a playfulness that involved themselves in a ridiculous indiscretion. Mrs. Bradley's eyes sought her husband's meaningly; Louise's pretty mouth hardened. Luckily, the cheerful cause of it suddenly jumped up from the table, and saying that the stranger was starving, insisted upon bringing a dish from the other side, and helping him herself plentifully. Mainwaring rose gallantly to take the dish from her hand, a slight scuffle ensued, which ended in the young man being forced down in his chair by the pressure of Minty's strong plump hand on his shoulder. "There," she said, "ye kin mind your dinner now, and I reckon we'll give the others a chance to chip into the conversation," and at once applied herself to the plate before her.

The conversation presently became general, with the exception that Minty, more or less engrossed by professional anxiety in the quality of the dinner and occasional hurried visits to the kitchen, briefly answered the few polite remarks which Mainwaring felt called upon to address to her. Nevertheless he was conscious, *malgré* her rallying allusions to Miss Macy, that he felt none of the vague yet half-pleasant anxiety with which Louise was beginning to inspire him. He felt at ease in Minty's presence, and believed, rightly or wrongly, that she understood him as well as he understood her. And there were certainly points in common between his two hostesses and their humbler though proud dependent. The social evolution of Mrs. Bradley and Louise Macy from some previous Minty was neither remote nor complete; the self-sufficient independence, ease, and quiet self-assertion were alike in each. The superior position was

still too recent and accidental for either to resent or criticize qualities that were common to both. At least, this was what he thought when not abandoning himself to the gratification of a convalescent appetite; to the presence of two pretty women, the sympathy of a genial friend, the healthy intoxication of the white sunlight that glanced upon the pine walls, the views that mirrored themselves in the open windows, and the pure atmosphere in which The Lookout seemed to swim. Wandering breezes of balm and spice lightly stirred the flowers on the table, and seemed to fan his hair and forehead with softly healing breath. Looking up in an interval of silence, he caught Bradley's grey eyes fixed upon him with a subdued light of amusement and affection, as of an elder brother regarding a schoolboy's boisterous appetite at some feast. Mainwaring laid down his knife and fork with a laughing colour, touched equally by Brad-

ley's fraternal kindliness and the consciousness of his gastronomical powers.

"Hang it, Bradley, look here! I know my appetite's disgraceful; but what can a fellow do? In such air, with such viands and such company! It's like the bees getting drunk on Hybla and Hymettus, you know. I'm not responsible!"

"It's the first square meal I believe you've really eaten in six months," said Bradley gravely. "I can't understand why your doctor allowed you to run down so dreadfully."

"I reckon you aint as keerful of yourself, you Britishers, ez us," said Minty. "Lordy! Why there's Pop invests in more patent medicines in one day than you have in two weeks, and he'd make two of you. Mebbe your folks don't look after you enough."

"I'm a splendid advertisement of what *your* care and your medicines have done," said Mainwaring, gratefully, to Mrs. Bradley; "and if you ever want to set up

a 'Cure' here, I'm ready with a ten-page testimonial."

"Have a care, Mainwaring," said Bradley, laughing, "that the ladies don't take you at your word. Louise and Jenny have been doing their best for the last year to get me to accept a flattering offer from a Sacramento firm to put up an Hotel for Tourists on the site of The Lookout. Why, I believe that they have already secretly in their hearts concocted a flaming prospectus of 'Unrivalled Scenery' and 'Health-giving Air,' and are looking forward to Saturday night hops on the piazza."

"Have you really though?" said Mainwaring, gazing from the one to the other.

"We should certainly see more company than we do now, and feel a little less out of the world," said Louise candidly. "There are no neighbours here—I mean the people at the Summit are not," she added, with a slight glance towards Minty.

"And Mr. Bradley would find it more

profitable—not to say more suitable to a man of his position—than this wretched saw-mill and timber business," said Mrs. Bradley decidedly.

Mainwaring was astounded; was it possible they considered it more dignified for a lawyer to keep an hotel than a saw-mill? Bradley, as if answering what was passing in his mind, said mischievously, "I'm not sure, exactly, what my position is, my dear, and I'm afraid I've declined the hotel on business principles. But, by the way, Mainwaring, I found a letter at the mill this morning from Mr. Richardson. He is about to pay us the distinguished honour of visiting The Lookout, solely on your account, my dear fellow."

"But I wrote him that I was much better, and it wasn't necessary for him to come," said Mainwaring,

"He makes an excuse of some law business with me. I suppose he considers the mere fact of his taking the trouble to come

here, all the way from San Francisco, a sufficient honour to justify any absence of formal invitation," said Bradley, smiling.

"But he's only—I mean he's my father's banker," said Mainwaring, correcting himself, "and—you don't keep an hotel."

"Not yet," returned Bradley, with a mischievous glance at the two women, "but The Lookout is elastic, and I dare say we can manage to put him up."

A silence ensued. It seemed as if some shadow, or momentary darkening of the brilliant atmosphere; some film across the mirror-like expanse of the open windows, or misty dimming of their wholesome light had arisen to their elevation. Mainwaring felt that he was looking forward with unreasoning indignation and uneasiness to this impending interruption of their idyllic life; Mrs. Bradley and Louise, who had become a little more constrained and formal under Minty's freedom, were less sympathetic; even the irrepressible Minty appeared

absorbed in the responsibilities of the dinner.

Bradley alone preserved his usual patient good-humour. "We'll take our coffee on the veranda, and the ladies will join us by-and-by, Mainwaring; besides, I don't know that I can allow you, as an invalid, to go entirely through Minty's bountiful *menu* at present. You shall have the sweets another time."

When they were alone on the veranda, he said, between the puffs of his black briarwood pipe—a pet aversion of Mrs. Bradley—"I wonder how Richardson will accept Minty!"

"If *I* can, I think he *must*," returned Mainwaring drily. "By Jove, it will be great fun to see him; but"—he stopped and hesitated—"I don't know about the ladies. I don't think, you know, that they'll stand Minty again before another stranger."

Bradley glanced quickly at the young

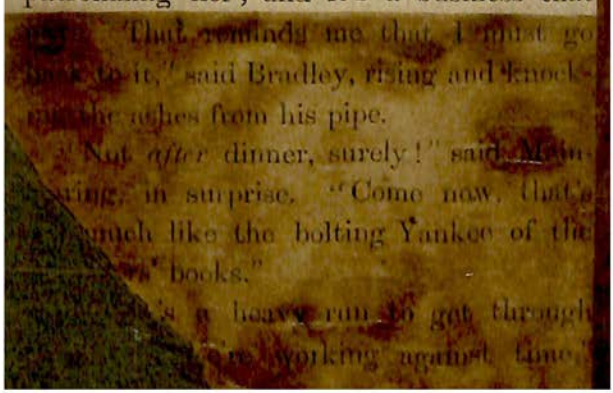
man; their eyes met, and they both joined in a superior and, I fear, disloyal smile. After a pause Bradley, as if in a spirit of further confidence, took his pipe from his mouth and pointed to the blue abyss before them.

"Look at that profundity, Mainwaring, and think of it ever being bullied and overawed by a long veranda-load of gaping, patronizing tourists, and the idiotic flirting females of their species. Think of a lot of over-dressed creatures flouting those severe outlines and deep-toned distances with frippery and garishness. You know how you have been lulled to sleep by that delicious indefinite far-off murmur of the canyon at night—think of it being broken by a crazy waltz or a monotonous German —by the clatter of waiters and the pop of champagne corks. And yet, by thunder, those women are capable of liking it, finding no discord in them!"

"Dancing aint half bad, you

Mainwaring conscientiously, "if a chap's got the wind to do it; and all Americans, especially the women, dance better than we do. But I say, Bradley, to hear you talk, a fellow wouldn't suspect you were as big a Vandal as anybody, with a beastly, howling saw-mill in the heart of the primeval forest. By Jove, you quite bowled me over that first day we met, when you popped your head out of that delirium tremens shaking mill, like the very genius of destructive improvement."

"But that was *fighting* Nature, not patronizing her; and it's a business that



returned Bradley. Even while speaking he had vanished within the house, returned quickly—having replaced his dark suit by jean trousers tucked in heavy boots, and a red flannel shirt over his starched white one—and, nodding gaily to Mainwaring, stepped from the lower end of the veranda. "The beggar actually looks pleased to go," said Mainwaring to himself in wonderment.

"Oh! Jim," said Mrs. Bradley, appearing at the door.

"Yes," said Bradley, faintly, from the bushes.

"Minty's ready. You might take her home."

"All right. I'll wait."

"I hope I haven't frightened Miss Sharpe away," said Mainwaring. "She isn't going, surely?"

"Only to get some better clothes, on account of company. I'm afraid you are giving her a good deal of trouble,

Mr. Mainwaring," said Mrs. Bradley, laughing.

"She wished me to say good-bye to you for her, as she couldn't come on the veranda in her old shawl and sun-bonnet," added Louise, who had joined them. "What do you really think of her, Mr. Mainwaring? I call her quite pretty, at times. Don't you?"

Mainwaring knew not what to say. He could not understand why they could have any special interest in the girl, or care to know what he, a perfect stranger, thought of her. He avoided a direct reply, however, by playfully wondering how Mrs. Bradley could subject her husband to Miss Minty's undivided fascinations.

"Oh, Jim always takes her home—if it's in the evening. He gets along with these people better than we do," returned Mrs. Bradley drily. "But," she added, with a return of her piquant Quaker-like coquettishness, "Jim says we are to devote our-

selves to you to-night—in retaliation, I suppose. We are to amuse you, and not let you get excited; and you are to be sent to bed early."

It is to be feared that these latter wise precautions—invaluable for all defenceless and enfeebled humanity—were not carried out; and it was late when Mainwaring eventually retired, with brightened eyes and a somewhat accelerated pulse. For the ladies, who had quite regained that kindly equanimity which Minty had rudely interrupted, had also added a delicate and confidential sympathy in their relations with Mainwaring—as of people who had suffered in common—and he experienced these tender attentions at their hands which any two women are emboldened by each other's saving presence to show any single member of our sex. Indeed, he hardly knew if his satisfaction was the more complete when Mrs. Bradley, withdrawing for a few moments, left him alone on the

veranda with Louise and the vast, omnipotent Night.

For awhile they sat silent, in the midst of the profound and measureless calm. Looking down upon the dim moonlit abyss at their feet, they themselves seemed a part of this night that arched above it; the half-risen moon appeared to linger long enough at their side to enwrap and suffuse them with its glory; a few bright stars quietly ringed themselves around them, and looked wonderingly into the level of their own shining eyes. For some vague yearning to humanity seemed to draw this dark and passionless void towards them. The vast protecting maternity of Nature leant hushed and breathless over this solitude. Warm currents of air rose occasionally from the valley, which one might have believed were sighs from its full and overflowing breast, or a grateful coolness swept their cheeks and air when the tranquil heights around them were moved

to slowly respond. Odours from invisible bay and laurel sometimes filled the air; the incense of some rare and remoter cultivated meadow beyond their ken, or the strong germinating breath of leagues of wild oats, that had yellowed the upland by day. In the silence and shadow, their voices took upon themselves, almost without their volition, a far-off confidential murmur, with intervals of meaning silence—rather as if their thoughts had spoken for themselves, and they had stopped wonderingly to listen. They talked at first vaguely to this discreet audience of space and darkness, and then, growing bolder, spoke to each other and of themselves. Invested by the infinite gravity of Nature, they had no fear of human ridicule to restrain their youthful conceit or the extravagance of their unimportant confessions. They talked of their tastes, of their habits, of their friends and acquaintances. They settled some points of doctrine, duty, and etiquette, with

the sweet seriousness of youth and its all-powerful convictions. The listening vines would have recognized no flirtation or love-making in their animated but important confidences; yet when Mrs. Bradley re-appeared to warn the invalid that it was time to seek his couch, they both coughed slightly in the nervous consciousness of some unaccustomed quality in their voices, and a sense of interruption far beyond their own or the innocent intruder's ken.

"Well?" said Mrs. Bradley, in the sitting-room as Mainwaring's steps retreated down the passage to his room.

"Well," said Louise with a slight yawn, leaning her pretty shoulders languidly against the door-post, as she shaded her moonlight-accustomed eyes from the vulgar brilliancy of Mrs. Bradley's bedroom candle. "Well—oh, he talked a great deal about 'his people' as he called them, and I talked about us. He's very nice. You know, in some things he's really like a boy."

"He looks much better."

"Yes; but he is far from strong, yet."

Meantime, Mainwaring had no other confidant of his impressions than his own thoughts. Mingled with his exaltation, which was the more seductive that it had no well-defined foundation for existing, and implied no future responsibility, was a recurrence of his uneasiness at the impending visit of Richardson the next day. Strangely enough, it had increased under the stimulus of the evening. Just as he was really getting on with the family, he felt sure that this visitor would import some foreign element into their familiarity, as Minty had done. It was very possible they would not like him; now he remembered there was really something ostentatiously British and insular about this Richardson—something they would likely resent. Why couldn't this fellow have come later—or even before? Before what? But here he fell asleep, and almost instantly slipped from this veranda

in the Sierras, six thousand miles away, to an ancient terrace, overgrown with moss and tradition, that overlooked the sedate glory of an English park. Here he found himself, restricted painfully by his inconsistent night-clothes, endeavouring to impress his mother and sisters with the singular virtues and excellences of his American host and hostesses—virtues and excellences that he himself was beginning to feel conscious had become more or less apocryphal in that atmosphere. He heard his mother's voice saying severely, "When you learn, Francis, to respect the opinions and prejudices of your family enough to prevent your appearing before them in this uncivilized aboriginal costume, we will listen to what you have to say of the friends whose habits you seem to have adopted;" and he was frantically indignant that his efforts to convince them that his negligence was a personal oversight, and not a Californian custom, were utterly futile. But

even then this vision was brushed away by the bewildering sweep of Louise's pretty skirt across the dreamy picture, and her delicate features and softly fringed eyes remained the last to slip from his fading consciousness.

The moon rose higher and higher above the sleeping house and softly breathing canyon. There was nothing to mar the idyllic repose of the landscape; only the growing light of the last two hours had brought out in the far eastern horizon a dim white peak, that gleamed faintly among the stars, like a bridal couch spread between the hills ringed with fading nuptial torches. No one would have believed that behind that impenetrable shadow to the west, in the heart of the forest, the throbbing saw-mill of James Bradley was even at that moment eating its destructive way through the conserved growth of Nature and centuries, and that the refined proprietor of house and greenwood, with the glow of

his furnace fires on his red shirt, and his alert, intelligent eyes, was the geni of that devastation, and the toiling leader of the shadowy toiling figures around him.

CHAPTER III.

Amid the beauty of the most uncultivated and untrodden wilderness there are certain localities where the meaner and more common processes of Nature take upon themselves a degrading likeness to the slovenly, wasteful, and improvident processes of man. The unrecorded landslip disintegrating a whole hill-side will not only lay bare the delicate framework of strata and deposit to the vulgar eye, but hurl into the valley a débris so monstrous and unlovely as to shame even the hideous ruins left by dynamite, hydraulic, or pick and shovel; an overflown and forgotten woodland torrent will leave in some remote hollow a disturbed and ungraceful chaos of inextricable logs, branches, rock, and soil

that will rival the unsavoury details of some wrecked or abandoned settlement. Of lesser magnitude and importance, there are certain natural dust-heaps, sinks, and cesspools, where the elements have collected the cast-off, broken, and frayed dis-jecta of wood and field—the sweepings of the sylvan household. It was remarkable that Nature, so kindly considerate of mere human ruins, made no attempt to cover up or disguise these monuments of her own mortality: no grass grew over the unsightly landslides, no moss or ivy clothed the stripped and bleached skeletons of over-thrown branch and tree; the dead leaves and withered husks rotted in their open grave uncrossed by vine or creeper. Even the animals, except the lower organizations, shunned those haunts of decay and ruin.

It was scarcely a hundred yards from one of those dreary receptacles that Mr. Bradley had taken leave of Miss Minty Sharpe. The cabin occupied by her father,

herself, and a younger brother, stood, in fact, on the very edge of the little hollow, which was partly filled with decayed wood, leaves, and displacements of the crumbling bank, with the coal dust and ashes which Mr. Sharpe had added from his forge, that stood a few paces distant at the corner of a cross-road. The occupants of the cabin had also contributed to the hollow the refuse of their household in broken boxes, earthenware, tin cans, and cast-off clothing; and it is not improbable that the site of the cabin was chosen with reference to this convenient disposal of useless and encumbering impedimenta. It was true that the locality offered little choice in the way of beauty. An outcrop of brown granite—a portent of higher altitudes—extended a quarter of a mile from the nearest fringe of dwarf laurel and "brush" in one direction; in the other an advanced file of Bradley's woods had suffered from some long-forgotten fire, and still raised its blackened masts

and broken stumps over the scorched and arid soil, swept of older underbrush and verdure. On the other side of the road a dark ravine, tangled with briars and haunted at night by owls and wild cats, struggled wearily on, until blundering at last upon the edge of the Great Canyon, it slipped and lost itself for ever in a single furrow of those mighty flanks. When Bradley had once asked Sharpe why he had not built his house in the ravine, the blacksmith had replied: "That until the Lord had appointed his time, he reckoned to keep his head above ground and the foundations thereof." Howbeit the ravine, or the "run" as it was locally known, was Minty's only Saturday-afternoon resort for recreation or berries. "It was," she had explained, "pow'ful soothin', and solitary."

She entered the house—a rude, square building of unpainted boards—containing a sitting-room, a kitchen, and two bedrooms. A glance at these rooms, which

were plainly furnished, and whose canvas-coloured walls were adorned with gorgeous agricultural implement circulars, patent medicine calendars, with poly-tinted chromos and cheaply illuminated Scriptural texts, showed her that a certain neatness and order had been preserved during her absence; and, finding the house empty, she crossed the barren and blackened intervening space between the back door and her father's forge, and entered the open shed. The light was fading from the sky; but the glow of the forge lit up the dusty road before it, and accented the blackness of the rocky ledge beyond. A small curly-headed boy, bearing a singular likeness to a smudged and blackened crayon drawing of Minty, was mechanically blowing the bellows, and obviously intent upon something else; while her father—a powerfully built man, with a quaintly dissatisfied expression of countenance—was with equal want of in-

terest mechanically hammering at a horse-shoe. Without noticing Minty's advent, he lazily broke into a querulous drawling chaunt of some vague religious character:

"O tur-ren, sinner; tur-ren.
For the Lord bids you turn—ah!
O tur-ren, sinner; tur-ren.
Why will you die?"

The musical accent adapted itself to the monotonous fall of the sledge-hammer; and at every repetition of the word "turn," he suited the action to the word by turning the horse-shoe with the iron in his left hand. A slight grunt at the end of every stroke, and the simultaneous repetition of "turn," seemed to offer him amusement and relief. Minty, without speaking, crossed the shop, and administered a sound box on her brother's ear. "Take that, and let me ketch you agen layin' low when my back's turned, to put on your store pants."

"The others had fetched away in the

laig," said the boy, opposing a knee and elbow at acute angle to further attack.

"You jest get and change 'em," said Minty.

The sudden collapse of the bellows broke in upon the soothing refrain of Mr. Sharpe, and caused him [redacted] also.

"It's Minty," he said, replacing the horse-shoe on the coals, and setting his powerful arms and the sledge on the anvil with an exaggerated expression of weariness.

"Yes; it's me," said Minty, "and Creation knows it's time I *did* come, to keep that boy from ruinin' us with his airs and conceits."

"Did ye bring over any o' that fever mixter?"

"No. Bradley sez you're loading yerself up with so much o' that bitter bark—kuinine they call it over there—that you'll lift the ruff off your head next. He allows ye aint got no ague; it's jest wind and

dyspepsy. He sez yer's strong ez a hoss."

"Bradley," said Sharpe, laying aside his sledge with an aggrieved manner, which was, however, as complacent as his fatigue and discontent, "ez one of them nat'ral born finikin skunk[illegible]ise. I reckon he began to give p'ints to his parents when he was about knee-high to Richelieu there. He's on them confidential terms with hisself and the Almighty that he reckons he ken run a saw-mill and a man's insides at the same time with one hand tied behind him. And his fininkin is up to his conceit: he wanted to tell me that that yer handy brush dump outside our shanty was unhealthy. Give a man with frills like that his own way and he'd be a sprinkling odor Cologne and peppermint all over the country."

"He set your shoulder as well as any doctor," said Minty.

"That's bone-settin', and a nat'ral gift,"

returned Sharpe, as triumphantly as his habitual depression would admit; "it aint conceit and finikin got out o' books! Well," he added, after a pause, "wot's happened?"

Minty's face slightly changed. "Nothin'; I kem back to get some things," she said shortly, moving away.

"And ye saw *him*?"

"Ye-e-s," drawled Minty carelessly, still retreating.

"Bixby was along here about noon. He says the stranger was suthin' high and mighty in his own country, and them 'Frisco millionaires are quite sweet on him. Where are ye goin'?"

"In the house."

"Well, look yer, Minty. Now that you're here, ye might get up a batch o' hot biscuit for supper. Dinner was that promiscous and experimental to-day, along o' Richelieu's nat'ral foolin', that I think I could git outside of a little suthin' now, if only to prop

up a kind of innard sinkin' that takes me. Ye ken tell me the news at supper."

Later, however, when Mr. Sharpe had quitted his forge for the night and, seated at his domestic board, was, with a dismal presentiment of future indigestion, voraciously absorbing his favourite meal of hot saleratus biscuits swimming in butter, he had apparently forgotten his curiosity concerning Mainwaring and settled himself to a complaining chronicle of the day's mishaps. "Nat'rally, havin' an extra lot o' work on hand and no time for foolin', what does that ornery Richelieu get up and do this mornin'? Ye know them ridiklus specimens that he's been chippin' outer that ledge that the yearth slipped from down the run, and litterin' up the whole shanty with 'em. Well, darn my skin! if he didn't run a heap of 'em, mixed up with coal, unbeknownd to me, in the forge, to make what he called a 'fire essay' of 'em. Nat'rally I couldn't get a blessed iron hot, and didn't

know what had gone of the fire, or the coal either, for two hours, till I stopped work and raked out the coal. That comes from his hangin' round that saw-mill in the woods, and listenin' to Bradley's high-falutin' talk about rocks and strata and sich."

"But Bradley don't go a cent on minin', Pop," said Minty. "He sez the woods is good enough for him; and there's millions to be made when the railroad comes along, and timber's wanted."

"But until then he's got to keep hisself, to pay wages, and keep the mill runnin'. Onless it's, ez Bixby says, that he hopes to get that Englishman to rope in some o' them 'Frisco friends of his to take a hand. Ye didn't have any o' that kind o' talk, did ye?"

"No; not *that* kind o' talk," said Minty.

"Not *that* kind o' talk!" repeated her father with aggrieved curiosity. "Wot kind, then?"

"Well," said Minty, lifting her black eyes to her father's; "I aint no account, and you aint no account either; you aint got no college education, aint got no friends in 'Frisco, and aint got no high-toned style; I can't play the pianner, jabber French, nor get French dresses; we aint got no fancy 'Shallet,' as they call it, with a first-class view of nothing; we've only a shanty on dry rock! But, afore *I'd* take advantage of a lazy, gawky boy—for it aint anything else, though he's good meanin' enough—that happened to fall sick in *my* house, and coax and cosset him, and wrap him in white cotton, and mother him, and sister him, and Aunt Sukey him, and almost dry-nuss him gin'rally, jist to get him sweet on me and on mine, and take the inside track of others —*I'd* be an Injin! And if you'd allow it, Pop, you'd be wuss nor a nigger!"

"Sho!" said her father, kindling with that intense gratification with which the male receives any intimation of alien femi-

nine weakness. "It aint that, Minty, I wanter know!"

"It's jist that, Pop; and I ez good ez let 'em know I seed it. I aint a fool, if some folk do drop their eyes and pertend to wipe the laugh out of their noses with a handkerchief when I let out to speak. I mayn't be good enough kempany——"

"Look yer, Minty," interrupted the blacksmith sternly, half rising from his seat with every trace of his former weakness vanished from his hard-set face; "do you mean to say that they put on airs to ye—to *my* darter?"

"No," said Minty quickly; "the men didn't, and don't you, a man, mix yourself up with women's meannesses. I ken manage 'em, Pop, with one hand."

Mr. Sharpe looked at his daughter's flashing black eyes. Perhaps an uneasy recollection of the late Mrs. Sharpe's remarkable capacity in that respect checked his further rage.

"No. Wot I was sayin'," resumed Minty, "ez that I mayn't be thought by others good enough to keep kempany with baronetts ez is to be—though baronetts mightn't object—but I aint mean enough to try to steal away some ole woman's darling boy in England, or snatch some likely young English girl's big brother outer the family without sayin' by your leave. How'd you like it if Richelieu was growed up, and went to sea—and it would be like his peartness—and he fell sick in some foreign land, and some princess or other skyugled *him* underhand away from us?"

Probably owing to the affair of the specimens, the elder Sharpe did not seem to regard the possible mesalliance of Richelieu with extraordinary disfavour. "That boy is conceited enough with hair ile and fine clothes for anything," he said plaintively. "But didn't that Louie Macy hev a feller already—that Captain Greyson? Wot's gone o' him?"

"That's it," said Minty; "he kin go out in the woods and whistle now. But all the same, she could hitch him in again at any time if the other stranger kicked over the traces. That's the style over there at The Lookout. There aint ez much heart in them two women put together ez would make a green gal flush up playin' forfeits. It's all in their breed, Pop. Love aint going to spile their appetites and complexions, give 'em nose-bleed, nor put a drop o' water into their eyes in all their natural born days. That's wot makes me mad. Ef I thought that Loo cared a bit for that child I wouldn't mind; I'd just advise her to make him get up and get—pack his duds out o' camp, and go home and not come back until he had a written permit from his mother, or the other baronet in office."

"Looks sorter ef some one orter interfere," said the blacksmith reflectively.

"'Taint exakly a case for a vigilance committee, tho' it's agin public morals this sorter kidnappin' o' strangers. Looks ez if it might bring the county into discredit in England."

"Well, don't *you* go and interfere and havin' folks say ez my nose was put out o' jint over there," said Minty curtly. "There's another Englishman comin' up from 'Frisco to see him to-morrow. Ef he aint scooped up by Jenny Bradley he'll guess there's a nigger in the fence somewhere. But there, Pop, let it drop. It's a bad aig, anyway," she concluded, rising from the table, and passing her hands down her frock and her shapely hips as if to wipe off further contamination of the subject. "Where's Richelieu agin?"

"Said he didn't want supper, and like ez not he's gone over to see that fammerly at the Summit. There's a little girl thar he's sparkin', about his own age."

"His own age!" said Minty indig-

nantly. "Why she's double that, if she's a day. Well—if he aint the triflinest, conceitednest little limb that ever grew! I'd like to know where he got it from—it wasn't mar's style."

Mr. Sharpe smiled darkly. Richelieu's precocious gallantry evidently was not considered as gratuitous as his experimental metallurgy. But as his eyes followed his daughter's wholesome, Phyllis-like figure, a new idea took possession of him; needless to say, however, it was in the line of another personal aggrievement, albeit it took the form of religious reflection.

"It's curous, Minty, wot's fore-ordained, and wot aint. Now, yer's one of them high and mighty fellows, after the Lord, ez comes meanderin' around here, and drops off—ez fur ez I kin hear—in a kind o' faint at the first house he kems to, and is taken in and lodged and sumptuously fed; and nat'rally, they gets their reward

for it. Now, wot's to hev kept that young feller from coming *here* and droppin' down in my forge, or in this very room, and *you* a tendin' him, and jist layin' over them folks at The Lookout?"

"Wot's got hold o' ye, Pop? Don't I tell ye he had a letter to Jim Bradley?" said Minty quickly, with an angry flash of colour in her cheek.

"That aint it," said Sharpe confidently; "it's cos he *walked*. Nat'rally you'd think he'd *ride*, being high and mighty, and that's where, ez the parson will tell ye, wot's merely fi-nite and human wisdom errs! Ef that feller had ridden he'd have had to come by this yer road, and by this yer forge, and stop a spell like any other. But it was fore-ordained that he should walk, jest cos it wasn't generally kalkilated and reckoned on. So *you* had no show."

For a moment, Minty seemed struck with her father's original theory. But

with a vigorous shake of her shoulders she threw it off. Her eyes darkened.

"I reckon you aint thinking, Pop"—she began.

"I was only sayin' it was curous," he rejoined quietly. Nevertheless, after a pause, he rose, coughed, and going up to the young girl, as she leaned over the dresser, bent his powerful arm around her, and drawing her and the plate she was holding against his breast, laid his bearded cheek for an instant softly upon her rebellious head. "It's all right, Minty," he said; "ain't it, pet?" Minty's eyelids closed gently under the familiar pressure. "Wot's that in your hair, Minty?" he said tactfully, breaking an embarrassing pause.

"Bar's grease, father," murmured Minty in a child's voice—the grown-up woman, under that magic touch, having lapsed again into her father's motherless charge of ten years before.

"It's pow'ful soothin', and pretty," said her father.

"I made it myself—do you want some?" asked Minty.

"Not now, girl!" For a moment they slightly rocked each other in that attitude —the man dextrously, the woman with infinite tenderness—and then they separated.

Late that night, after Richelieu had returned, and her father wrestled in his fitful sleep with the remorse of his guilty indulgence at supper, Minty remained alone in her room, hard at work, surrounded by the contents of one of her mother's trunks and the fragments of certain ripped-up and newly-turned dresses. For Minty had conceived the bold idea of altering one of her mother's gowns to the fashion of a certain fascinating frock worn by Louise Macy. It was late when her self-imposed task was completed. With a nervous trepidation that was novel to her,

Minty began to disrobe herself preparatory to trying on her new creation. The light of a tallow candle and a large swinging lantern, borrowed from her father's forge, fell shyly on her milky neck and shoulders, and shone in her sparkling eyes, as she stood before her largest mirror—the long glazed door of a kitchen clock which she had placed upon her chest of drawers. Had poor Minty been content with the full, free, and goddess-like outlines that it reflected, she would have been spared her impending disappointment. For, alas! the dress of her model had been framed upon a symmetrically attenuated French corset, and the unfortunate Minty's fuller and ampler curves had under her simple country stays known no more restraining cincture than knew the Venus of Milo. The alteration was a hideous failure; it was neither Minty's statuesque outline nor Louise Macy's graceful contour. Minty was no fool, and the revelation of this slow

education of the figure and training of outline—whether fair or false in art—struck her quick intelligence with all its full and hopeless significance. A bitter light sprang to her eyes; she tore the wretched sham from her shoulders, and then wrapping a shawl around her, threw herself heavily and sullenly on the bed. But inaction was not a characteristic of Minty's emotion; she presently rose again, and, taking an old work-box from her trunk, began to rummage in its recesses. It was an old shell-encrusted affair, and the apparent receptacle of such cheap odds and ends of jewellery as she possessed: a hideous cameo ring, the property of the late Mrs. Sharpe, was missing. She again rapidly explored the contents of the box, and then an inspiration seized her, and she darted into her brother's bedroom.

That precocious and gallant Lovelace of ten, despite all sentiment, had basely succumbed to the gross materialism of

youthful slumber. On a cot in the corner, half hidden under the wreck of his own careless and hurried disrobing, with one arm hanging out of the coverlid, Richelieu lay supremely unconscious. On the forefinger of his small but dirty hand the missing cameo was still glittering guiltily. With a swift movement of indignation Minty rushed with uplifted palm towards the tempting expanse of youthful cheek that lay invitingly exposed upon the pillow. Then she stopped suddenly.

She had seen him lying thus a hundred times before. On the pillow near him an undistinguishable mass of golden fur—the helpless bulk of a squirrel chained to the leg of his cot; at his feet a wall-eyed cat, who had followed his tyrannous caprices with the long-suffering devotion of her sex; on the shelf above him a loathsome collection of flies and tarantulas in dull green bottles; a slab of ginger-bread for light nocturnal refection, and her own pot of

bear's grease. Perhaps it was the piteous defencelessness of youthful sleep, perhaps it was some lingering memory of her father's caress; but as she gazed at him with troubled eyes, the juvenile reprobate slipped back into the baby-boy that she had carried in her own childish arms such a short time ago, when the maternal responsibility had descended with the dead mother's ill-fitting dresses upon her lank girlish figure and scant virgin breast—and her hand fell listlessly at her side.

The sleeper stirred slightly and awoke. At the same moment, by some mysterious sympathy, a pair of beady bright eyes appeared in the bulk of fur near his curls, the cat stretched herself, and even a vague agitation was heard in the bottles on the shelf. Richelieu's blinking eyes wandered from the candle to his sister, and then the guilty hand was suddenly withdrawn under the bedclothes.

"No matter, dear," said Minty; "it's

mar's, and you kin wear it when you like, if you'll only ask for it."

Richelieu wondered if he was dreaming! This unexpected mildness—this inexplicable tremor in his sister's voice: it must be some occult influence of the night season on the sisterly mind, possibly akin to a fear of ghosts! He made a mental note of it in view of future favours, yet for the moment he felt embarrassedly gratified. "Ye aint wantin' anything, Minty," he said affectionately; "a pail o' cold water from the far spring—no, nothin'?" He made an ostentatious movement as if to rise, yet sufficiently protracted to prevent any hasty acceptance of his prodigal offer.

"No, dear," she said, still gazing at him with an absorbed look in her dark eyes.

Richelieu felt a slight creepy sensation under that lovely far-off gaze. "Your eyes look awful big at night, Minty," he said. He would have added "and pretty," but she was his sister, and he had the lofty

fraternal conviction of his duty in repressing the inordinate vanity of the sex. "Ye're sure ye aint wantin' nothin'?"

"Not now, dear." She paused a moment, and then said deliberately: "But you wouldn't mind turnin' out after sun-up and runnin' an errand for me over to The Lookout?"

Richelieu's eyes sparkled so suddenly that even in her absorption Minty noticed the change. "But ye're not goin' to tarry over there, ner gossip—you hear? Yer to take this yer message. Yer to say, 'that it will be onpossible for me to come back there, on account—on account of'——"

"Important business," suggested Richelieu; "that's the perlite style."

"Ef you like." She leaned over the bed and put her lips to his forehead, still damp with the dews of sleep, and then to his long-lashed lids. "Mind Nip!"—the squirrel—he practically suggested. For an instant their blonde curls mingled on the pillow. "Now go to sleep," she said curtly.

But Richelieu had taken her white neck in the short strangulatory hug of the small boy, and held her fast. "Ye'll let me put on my best pants?"

"Yes."

"And wear that ring?"

"Yes"—a little sadly.

"Then yer kin count me in, Minty; and see here"—his voice sank to a confidential whisper—"mebbee some day ye'll be beholden to *me* for a lot o' real jewellery."

She returned slowly to her room, and, opening the window, looked out upon the night. The same moon that had lent such supererogatory grace to the natural beauty of The Lookout, here seemed to have failed, as Minty had, in disguising the relentless limitations of Nature or the cruel bonds of custom. The black plain of granite, under its rays, appeared only to extend its poverty to some remoter barrier; the blackened stumps of the burnt forest stood bleaker against the sky, like broken and twisted pillars of iron. The cavity of the broken

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ledge where Richelieu had prospected was a hideous chasm of bluish blackness, over which a purple vapour seemed to hover; the "brush dump" beside the house showed a cavern of writhing and distorted objects stiffened into dark rigidity. She had often looked upon the prospect: it had never seemed so hard and changeless; yet she accepted it, as she had accepted it before.

She turned away, undressed herself mechanically, and went to bed. She had an idea that she had been very foolish; that her escape from being still more foolish was something miraculous, and in some measure connected with Providence, her father, her little brother, and her dead mother, whose dress she had recklessly spoiled. But that she had even so slightly touched the bitterness and glory of renunciation—as written of heroines and fine ladies by novelists and poets—never entered the foolish head of Minty Sharpe, the blacksmith's daughter.

CHAPTER IV.

It was a little after daybreak next morning that Mainwaring awoke from the first unrefreshing night he had passed at The Look-out. He was so feverish and restless that he dressed himself at sunrise, and cautiously stepped out upon the still silent veranda. The chairs which he and Louise Macy had occupied were still, it seemed to him, conspicuously confidential with each other, and he separated them; but as he looked down into the Great Canyon at his feet he was conscious of some undefinable change in the prospect. A slight mist was rising from the valley, as if it were the last of last night's illusions; the first level sunbeams were obtrusively searching, and the keen morning air had a dryly practical insistance

which irritated him, until a light footstep on the further end of the veranda caused him to turn sharply.

It was the singular apparition of a small boy, bearing a surprising resemblance to Minty Sharpe, and dressed in a unique fashion. On a tumbled sea of blonde curls a "chip" sailor hat, with a broad red ribbon, rode jauntily. But here the nautical suggestion changed, as had the desire of becoming a pirate which induced it. A red shirt, with a white collar, and a yellow plaid ribbon tie, that also recalled Minty Sharpe, lightly turned the suggestion of his costume to mining. Short black velvet trousers, coming to his knee, and ostentatiously new short-legged boots, with visible straps like curling ears, completed the entirely original character of his lower limbs.

Mainwaring, always easily gentle and familiar with children and his inferiors, looked at him with an encouraging smile.

Richelieu—for it was he—advanced gravely and held out his hand, with the cameo ring apparent. Mainwaring, with equal gravity, shook it warmly, and removed his hat. Richelieu, keenly observant, did the same.

"Is Jim Bradley out yet?" asked Richelieu carelessly.

"No; I think not. But I'm Frank Mainwaring. Will I do?"

Richelieu smiled. The dimples, the white teeth, the dark, laughing eyes, were surely Minty's?

"I'm Richelieu," he rejoined with equal candour.

"Richelieu?"

"Yes. That Frenchman—the Lord Cardinal—you know. Mar saw Forrest do him out in St. Louis."

"Do him?"

"Yes, in the theayter."

With a confused misconception of his meaning, Mainwaring tried to recall the historical dress of the great Cardinal and

fit it to the masquerader—if such he were—before him. But Richelieu relieved him by adding—

"Richelieu Sharpe."

"Oh, that's your *name!*" said Mainwaring cheerfully. "Then you're Miss Minty's brother. I know her. How jolly lucky!"

They both shook hands again. Richelieu, eager to get rid of the burden of his sister's message, which he felt was in the way of free-and-easy intercourse with this charming stranger, looked uneasily towards the house.

"I say," said Mainwaring, "if you're in a hurry, you'd better go in there and knock. I hear some one stirring in the kitchen."

Richelieu nodded, but first went back to the steps of the veranda, picked up a small blue knotted handkerchief, apparently containing some heavy objects, and repassed Mainwaring.

"What! have you cut it, Richelieu, with

your valuables? What have you got there?"

"Specimens," said Richelieu shortly, and vanished.

He returned presently. "Well, Cardinal, did you see anybody?" asked Mainwaring.

"Mrs. Bradley; but Jim's over to the mill. I'm goin' there."

"Did you see Miss Macy?" continued Mainwaring carelessly.

"Loo?"

"Loo!—well; yes."

"No. She's philanderin' with Captain Greyson."

"Philandering with Greyson?" echoed Mainwaring, in wonder.

"Yes; on horseback on the ridge."

"You mean she's riding out with Mr.—with Captain Greyson?"

"Yes; ridin' *and* philanderin'," persisted Richelieu.

"And what do you call philandering?"

"Well; I reckon you and she oughter know," returned Richelieu, with a precocious air.

"Certainly," said Mainwaring with a faint smile. Richelieu really was like Minty.

There was a long silence. This young Englishman was becoming exceedingly uninteresting. Richelieu felt that he was gaining neither profit nor amusement, and losing time. "I'm going," he said.

"Good morning," said Mainwaring, without looking up.

Richelieu picked up his specimens, thoroughly convinced of the stranger's glittering deceitfulness, and vanished.

It was nearly eight o'clock when Mrs. Bradley came from the house. She apologized, with a slightly distrait smile, for the tardiness of the household. "Mr. Bradley stayed at the mill all night, and will not be here until breakfast, when he brings your friend Mr. Richardson with him"—

Mainwaring scarcely repressed a movement of impatience—"who arrives early. It's unfortunate that Miss Sharpe can't come to-day."

In his abstraction Mainwaring did not notice that Mrs. Bradley slightly accented Minty's formal appellation, and said carelessly—

"Oh, that's why her brother came over here so early!"

"Did *you* see him?" asked Mrs. Bradley, almost abruptly.

"Yes. He is an amusing little beggar; but I think he shares his sister's preference for Mr. Bradley. He deserted me here in the veranda for him at the mill."

"Louise will keep you company as soon as she has changed her dress," continued Mrs. Bradley. "She was out riding early this morning with a friend. She's very fond of early morning rides."

"*And* philandering," repeated Mainwaring to himself. It was quite natural for

Miss Macy to ride out in the morning, after the fashion of the country, with an escort; but why had the cub insisted on the "philandering"? He had said, "*and* philandering," distinctly. It was a nasty thing for him to say. Any other fellow but he, Mainwaring, might misunderstand the whole thing. Perhaps he ought to warn her—but no! he could not repeat the gossip of a child, and that child the brother of one of her inferiors. But was Minty an inferior? Did she and Minty talk together about this fellow Greyson? At all events, it would only revive the awkwardness of the preceding day, and he resolved to say nothing.

He was rewarded by a half-inquiring, half-confiding look in Louise's bright eyes, when she presently greeted him on the veranda. "She had quite forgotten," she said, "to tell him last night of her morning's engagement; indeed, she had half forgotten *it*. It used to be a favourite practice of

hers, with Captain Greyson; but she had lately given it up. She believed she had not ridden since—since——"

"Since when?" asked Mainwaring.

"Well, since you were ill," she said frankly.

A quick pleasure shone in Mainwaring's cheek and eye; but Louise's pretty lids did not drop, nor her faint quiet bloom deepen. Breakfast was already waiting when Mr. Richardson arrived alone. He explained that Mr. Bradley had some important and unexpected business which had delayed him, but which, he added, "Mr. Bradley says may prove interesting enough to you to excuse his absence this morning." Mainwaring was not displeased that his critical and observant host was not present at their meeting. Louise Macy was, however, as demurely conscious of the different bearing of the two compatriots. Richardson's somewhat self-important patronage of the two ladies, and that Californian familiarity

he had acquired, changed to a certain uneasy deference towards Mainwaring; while the younger Englishman's slightly stiff and deliberate cordiality was, nevertheless, mingled with a mysterious understanding that appeared innate and unconscious. Louise was quick to see that these two men, more widely divergent in quality than any two of her own countrymen, were yet more subtly connected by some unknown sympathy than the most equal of Americans. Minty's prophetic belief of the effect of the two women upon Richardson was certainly true as regarded Mrs. Bradley. The banker —a large material nature—was quickly fascinated by the demure, puritanic graces of that lady, and was inclined to exhibit a somewhat broad and ostentatious gallantry that annoyed Mainwaring. When they were seated alone on the veranda, which the ladies had discreetly left to them, Richardson said—

"Odd I didn't hear of Bradley's wife

before. She seems a spicy, pretty, comfortable creature. Regularly thrown away with him up here."

Mainwaring replied coldly that she was "an admirable helpmeet of a very admirable man," not, however, without an uneasy recollection of her previous confidences respecting her husband. "They have been most thoroughly good and kind to me; my own brother and sister could not have done more. And certainly not with better taste or delicacy," he added markedly.

"Certainly, certainly," said Richardson hurriedly. "I wrote to Lady Mainwaring that you were taken capital care of by some very honest people, and that——"

"Lady Mainwaring already knows what I think of them, and what she owes to their kindness," said Mainwaring drily.

"True, true," said Richardson apologetically. "Of course you must have seen a good deal of them. I only know Bradley

in a business way. He's been trying to get the Bank to help him put up some new mills here; but we didn't see it. I daresay he is good company—rather amusing, eh?"

Mainwaring had the gift of his class of snubbing by the polite and forgiving oblivion of silence. Richardson shifted uneasily in his chair, but continued with assumed carelessness.

"No; I only knew of this cousin, Miss Macy. I heard of her when she was visiting some friends in Menlo Park last year. Rather an attractive girl. They say Colonel Johnson, of Sacramento, took quite a fancy to her—it would have been a good match, I daresay, for he is very rich; but the thing fell through in some way. Then they say *she* wanted to marry that Spaniard, young Pico, of the Amador Ranche; but his family wouldn't hear of it. Somehow she's deuced unlucky. I suppose she'll make a mess of it with that

Captain Greyson she was out riding with this morning."

"Didn't the Bank think Bradley's mills a good investment?" asked Mainwaring quietly, when Richardson paused.

"Not with him in it; he is not a business man, you know."

"I thought he was. He seems to me an energetic man, who knows his work, and is not afraid to look after it himself."

"That's just it. He has got absurd ideas of co-operating with his workmen, you know, and doing everything slowly, and on a limited scale. The only thing to be done is to buy up all the land on this ridge, run off the settlers, freeze out all the other mills, and put it into a big San Francisco company on shares. That's the only way we would look at it."

"But you don't consider the investment bad, even from *his* point of view?

"Perhaps not."

"And you only decline it because it isn't big enough for the Bank?"

"Exactly."

"Richardson," said Mainwaring, slowly rising, putting his hands in his trouser pockets and suddenly looking down upon the banker from the easy level of habitual superiority, "I wish you'd attend to this thing for me. I desire to make some return to Mr. Bradley for his kindness. I wish to give him what help he wants—in his own way—you understand. I wish it, and I believe my father wishes it too. If you'd like him to write to you to that effect——"

"By no means; it's not at all necessary," said Richardson, dropping with equal suddenness into his old-world obsequiousness. "I shall certainly do as you wish. It is not a bad investment, Mr. Mainwaring, and, as you suggest, a very proper return for their kindness. And,

being here, it will come quite naturally for me to take up the affair again."

"And—I say, Richardson."

"Yes, sir?"

"As these ladies are rather short-handed in their domestic service, you know, perhaps you'd better *not* stay to luncheon or dinner, but go on to the Summit House—it's only a mile or two further—and come back here this evening. I sha'n't want you until then."

"Certainly!" stammered Richardson. "I'll just take leave of the ladies!"

"It's not at all necessary," said Mainwaring quietly; "you would only disturb them in their household duties. I'll tell them what I've done with you if they ask. You'll find your stick and hat in the passage, and you can leave the veranda by these steps. By the way, you had better manage at the Summit to get some one to bring my traps from here to be forwarded to Sacramento to-morrow. I'll

want a conveyance, or a horse of some kind, myself, for I've given up walking for a while; but we can settle about that to-night. Come early. Good morning!"

He accompanied his thoroughly subjugated countryman — who, however, far from attempting to reassert himself, actually seemed easier and more cheerful in his submission—to the end of the veranda, and watched him depart. As he turned back he saw the pretty figure of Louise Macy leaning against the doorway. How graceful and refined she looked in that simple morning dress! What wonder that she was admired by Greyson, by Johnson, and by that Spaniard!—no, by Jove, it was *she* that wanted to marry him!

"What have you sent away Mr. Richardson for?" asked the young girl, with a half-reproachful, half-mischievous look in her bright eyes.

"I packed him off because I thought it

was a little too hard on you and Mrs. Bradley to entertain him without help."

"But as he was *our* guest, you might have left that to us," said Miss Macy.

"By Jove! I never thought of that," said Mainwaring, colouring in consternation. "Pray forgive me, Miss Macy—but, you see, I knew the man, and could say it, and you couldn't."

"Well, I forgive you, for you look really so cut up," said Louise, laughing. "But I don't know what Jenny will say of your disposing of her conquest so summarily." She stopped and regarded him more attentively. "Has he brought you any bad news? if so, it's a pity you didn't send him away before. He's quite spoiling our cure."

Mainwaring thought bitterly that he had. "But it's a cure for all that, Miss Macy," he said, with an attempt at cheerfulness; "and being a cure, you see, there's no longer an excuse for my staying here. I

have been making arrangements for leaving here to-morrow."

"So soon?"

"Do you think it soon, Miss Macy?" asked Mainwaring, turning pale in spite of himself.

"I quite forgot—that you were here as an invalid only, and that we owe our pleasure to the accident of your pain."

She spoke a little artificially, he thought, yet her cheeks had not lost their pink bloom, nor her eyes their tranquillity. Had he heard Minty's criticism he might have believed that the organic omission noticed by her was a fact.

"And now that your good work as Sister of Charity is completed, you'll be able to enter the world of gaiety again with a clear conscience," said Mainwaring, with a smile that he inwardly felt was a miserable failure. "You'll be able to resume your morning rides, you know, which the wretched invalid interrupted."

Louise raised her clear eyes to his, without reproach, indignation, or even wonder. He felt as if he had attempted an insult and failed.

"Does my cousin know you are going so soon?" she asked finally.

"No, I did not know myself until to-day. You see," he added hastily, while his honest blood blazoned the lie in his cheek, "I've heard of some miserable business affairs that will bring me back to England sooner than I expected."

"I think you should consider your health more important than any mere business," said Louise. "I don't mean that you should remain *here*," she added with a hasty laugh, "but it would be a pity, now that you have reaped the benefit of rest and taking care of yourself, that you should not make it your only business to seek it elsewhere."

Mainwaring longed to say that within the last half-hour, living or dying had

become of little moment to him; but he doubted the truth or efficacy of this time-worn heroic of passion. He felt, too, that anything he said was a mere subterfuge for the real reason of his sudden departure. And how was he to question her as to that reason? In escaping from these subterfuges, he was compelled to lie again. With an assumption of changing the subject, he said carelessly, "Richardson thought he had met you before—in Menlo Park, I think."

Amazed at the evident irrelevance of the remark, Louise said coldly that she did not remember having seen him before.

"I think it was at a Mr. Johnson's—or *with* a Mr. Johnson—or perhaps at one of those Spanish Ranches—I think he mentioned some name like Pico!"

Louise looked at him wonderingly for an instant and then gave way to a frank, irrepressible laugh, which lent her delicate but rather set little face all the colour he had missed. Partially relieved by her un-

concern, and yet mortified that he had only provoked her sense of the ludicrous, he tried to laugh also.

"Then, to be quite plain," said Louise, wiping her now humid eyes, "you want me to understand that you really didn't pay sufficient attention to hear correctly! Thank you; that's a pretty English compliment, I suppose."

"I daresay you wouldn't call it 'philandering'?"

"I certainly shouldn't, for I don't know what 'philandering' means."

Mainwaring could not reply with Richelieu, "You ought to know"; nor did he dare explain what he thought it meant, and how he knew it. Louise, however, innocently solved the difficulty.

"There's a country song I've heard Minty sing," she said. "It runs—

> 'Come, Philander, let us be a-marchin',
> Every one for his true love a-sarchin';
> Choose your true love now or never. . . .'

Have you been listening to her also?"

"No," said Mainwaring, with a sudden incomprehensible, but utterly irrepressible, resolution; "but *I'm* 'a-marchin'', you know, and perhaps I must 'choose my true love now or never.' Will you help me, Miss Macy?"

He drew gently near her. He had become quite white, but also very manly, and it struck her, more deeply, thoroughly, and conscientiously sincere than any man who had before addressed her. She moved slightly away, as if to rest herself by laying both hands upon the back of the chair.

"Where do you expect to begin your 'sarchin''?" she said, leaning on the chair and tilting it before her; "or are you as vague as usual as to locality? Is it at some 'Mr. Johnson' or 'Mr. Pico,' or——"

"Here," he interrupted boldly.

"I really think you ought to first tell my cousin that you are going away to-morrow," she said, with a faint smile: "it's

such short notice. She's just in there." She nodded her pretty head, without raising her eyes, towards the hall.

"But it may not be so soon," said Mainwaring.

"Oh, then the 'sarchin'' is not so important?" said Louise, raising her head, and looking towards the hall with some uneasy but indefinable feminine instinct.

She was right; the sitting-room door opened, and Mrs. Bradley made her smiling appearance.

"Mr. Mainwaring was just looking for you," said Louise, for the first time raising her eyes to him. "He's not only sent off Mr. Richardson, but he's going away himself to-morrow."

Mrs. Bradley looked from the one to the other in mute wonder. Mainwaring cast an imploring glance at Louise, which had the desired effect. Much more seriously, and in a quaint, businesslike way, the young girl took it upon herself to explain to Mrs.

Bradley that Richardson had brought the invalid some important news that would, unfortunately, not only shorten his stay in America, but even compel him to leave The Lookout sooner than he expected—perhaps to-morrow. Mainwaring thanked her with his eyes, and then turned to Mrs. Bradley.

"Whether I go to-morrow or next day," he said with simple and earnest directness, "I intend, you know, to see you soon again, either here or in my own home in England. I do not know," he added with marked gravity, "that I have succeeded in convincing you that I have made your family already well known to my people, and that"—he fixed his eyes with a meaning look on Louise—"no matter when, or in what way, you come to them, your place is made ready for you. You may not like them, you know: the governor is getting to be an old man—perhaps too old for young Americans—but *they* will like *you*, and you must put up with that. My mother and

sisters know Miss Macy as well as I do, and will make her one of the family."

The conscientious earnestness with which these apparent conventionalities were uttered, and some occult quality of quiet conviction in the young man's manner, brought a pleasant sparkle to the eyes of Mrs. Bradley and Louise.

"But," said Mrs. Bradley gaily, "our going to England is quite beyond our present wildest dreams; nothing but a windfall, an unexpected rise in timber, or even the tabooed hotel speculation could make it possible."

"But *I* shall take the liberty of trying to present it to Mr. Bradley to-night in some practical way that may convince even his critical judgment," said Mainwaring, still seriously. "It will be," he added more lightly, "the famous testimonial of my cure which I promised you."

"And you will find Mr. Bradley so sceptical that you will be obliged to defer

your going," said Mrs. Bradley triumphantly. "Come, Louise, we must not forget that we have still Mr. Mainwaring's present comfort to look after; that Minty has basely deserted us, and that we ourselves must see that the last days of our guest beneath our roof are not remembered for their privation."

She led Louise away with a half-mischievous suggestion of maternal propriety, and left Mainwaring once more alone on the veranda.

He had done it! Certainly she must have understood his meaning, and there was nothing left for him now but to acquaint Bradley with his intentions to-night, and press her for a final answer in the morning. There would be no indelicacy then in asking her for an interview more free from interruption than this public veranda. Without conceit he did not doubt what the answer would be. His indecision, his sudden resolution to leave

her, had been all based upon the uncertainty of *his* own feelings, the propriety of *his* declaration, the possibility of some previous experience of hers that might compromise *him*. Convinced by her unembarrassed manner of her innocence, or rather satisfied of her indifference to Richardson's gossip, he had been hurried by his feelings into an unexpected avowal. Brought up in the perfect security of his own social position and familiarly conscious—without vanity—of its importance and power in such a situation, he believed, without undervaluing Louise's charms or independence, that he had no one else than himself to consult. Even the slight uneasiness that still pursued him was more due to his habitual conscientiousness of his own intention than to any fear that she would not fully respond to it. Indeed, with his conservative ideas of proper feminine self-restraint, Louise's calm passivity and undemonstrative attitude were a proof of her

superiority; had she blushed over-much, cried, or thrown herself into his arms, he would have doubted the wisdom of so easy a selection. It was true he had known her scarcely three weeks; if he chose to be content with that his own accessible record of three centuries should be sufficient for her, and condone any irregularity.

Nevertheless, as an hour slipped away and Louise did not make her appearance —either on the veranda or in the little sitting-room off the hall—Mainwaring became more uneasy as to the incompleteness of their interview. Perhaps a faint suspicion of the inadequacy of her response began to trouble him; but he still fatuously regarded it rather as owing to his own hurried and unfinished declaration. It was true that he hadn't said half what he intended to say; it was true that she might have misunderstood it as the conventional gallantry of the situation, as —terrible thought!—the light banter of

the habitual love-making American, to which she had been accustomed; perhaps even now she relegated him to the level of Greyson, and this accounted for her singular impassiveness—an impassiveness that certainly was singular now he reflected upon it—that might have been even contempt! The last thought pricked his deep conscientiousness; he walked hurriedly up and down the veranda, and then suddenly re-entering his room, took up a sheet of note-paper and began to write to her:—

"Can you grant me a few moments' interview alone? I cannot bear you should think that what I was trying to tell you when we were interrupted was prompted by anything but the deepest sincerity and conviction, or that I am willing it should be passed over lightly by you or be forgotten. Pray give me a chance of proving it by saying you will see me.

"F. M."

But how should he convey this to her? His delicacy revolted against handing it to her behind Mrs. Bradley's back, or the prestidigitation of slipping it into her lap or under her plate before them at luncheon; he thought for an instant of the Chinaman, but gentlemen—except in that "mirror of nature" the stage—usually hesitate to suborn other people's servants, or entrust a woman's secret to her inferiors. He remembered that Louise's room was at the further end of the house, and its low window gave upon the veranda, and was guarded at night by a film of white and blue curtains that were parted during the day to allow a triangular revelation of a pale blue and white draped interior. Mainwaring reflected that the low inside window-ledge was easily accessible from the veranda, would afford a capital lodgment for the note, and be quickly seen by the fair occupant of the room on entering. He sauntered slowly

past the window; the room was empty, the moment propitious. A slight breeze was stirring the blue ribbons of the curtain; it would be necessary to secure the note with something; he returned along the veranda to the steps, where he had noticed a small irregular stone lying, which had evidently escaped from Richelieu's bag of treasure specimens, and had been overlooked by that ingenuous child. It was of a pretty peacock-blue colour, and, besides securing a paper, would be sure to attract her attention. He placed his note on the inside ledge and the blue stone atop, and went away with a sense of relief.

Another half-hour passed without incident. He could hear the voices of the two women in the kitchen and dining-room. After a while they appeared to cease, and he heard the sound of an opening door. It then occurred to him that the veranda was still too exposed for a confidential interview, and he resolved to

descend the steps, pass before the windows of the kitchen where Louise might see him and penetrate the shrubbery, where she might be induced to follow him. They would not be interrupted nor overheard there.

But he had barely left the veranda before the figure of Richelieu, who had been patiently waiting for Mainwaring's disappearance, emerged stealthily from the shrubbery. He had discovered his loss on handing his "fire assays" to the good-humoured Bradley for later examination, and he had retraced his way, step by step, looking everywhere for his missing stone with the unbounded hopefulness, lazy persistency, and lofty disregard for time and occupation known only to the genuine boy. He remembered to have placed his knotted bag upon the veranda, and, slipping off his stiff boots, slowly and softly slid along against the wall of the house, looking carefully on the floor, and yet preserving a

studied negligence of demeanour, with one hand in his pocket and his small mouth contracted into a singularly soothing and almost voiceless whistle—Richelieu's own peculiar accomplishment. But no stone appeared. Like most of his genus he was superstitious, and repeated to himself the cabalistic formula: "Losin's seekin's, findin's keepin's"—presumed to be of great efficacy in such cases—with religious fervour. He had laboriously reached the end of the veranda when he noticed the open window of Louise's room, and stopped as a perfunctory duty to look in. And then Richelieu Sharpe stood for an instant utterly confounded and aghast at this crowning proof of the absolute infamy and sickening enormity of Man.

There was *his* stone—*his, Richelieu's, own specimen,* carefully gathered by himself and none other—and now stolen, abstracted, "skyugled," "smouged," "hooked" by this "rotten, skunkified, long-legged, splay-

footed, hoss-laughin', nigger-toothed, or'nary despot!" And, worse than all, actually made to do infamous duty as a love token! —a "candy-gift"!—a "philanderin' box"! to *his*, Richelieu's, girl—for Louise belonged to that innocent and vague outside seraglio of Richelieu's boyish dreams—and put atop of a letter to her! and Providence permitted such an outrage! "Wot was he, Richelieu, sent to school for, and organized wickedness in the shape of gorilla Injins like this allowed to ride high horses rampant over Californey!" He looked at the heavens in mute appeal. And then—Providence not immediately interfering—he thrust his own small arm into the window, regained his priceless treasure, and fled swiftly.

A fateful silence ensued. The wind slightly moved the curtain outward, as if in a playful attempt to follow him, and then subsided. A moment later, apparently reinforced by other winds, or sympathizing

with Richelieu, it lightly lifted the unlucky missive and cast it softly from the window. But here another wind, lying in wait, caught it cleverly, and tossed it, in a long curve, into the abyss. For an instant it seemed to float lazily, as on the mirrored surface of a lake; until, turning upon its side, it suddenly darted into utter oblivion.

When Mainwaring returned from the shrubbery, he went softly to the window. The disappearance of the letter and stone satisfied him of the success of his stratagem, and for the space of three hours relieved his anxiety. But at the end of that time, finding no response from Louise, his former uneasiness returned. Was she offended, or—the first doubt of her acceptance of him crossed his mind! A sudden and inexplicable sense of shame came upon him. At the same moment, he heard his name called from the steps, turned—and beheld Minty.

Her dark eyes were shining with a

pleasant light, and her lips parted on her white teeth with a frank, happy smile. She advanced and held out her hand. He took it with a mingling of disappointment and embarrassment.

"You're wondering why I kem on here, arter I sent word this morning that I kelkilated not to come. Well, 'twixt then and now suthin' 's happened. We've had fine doin's over at our house, you bet! Pop don't know which end he's standin' on; and I reckon that for about ten minutes I didn't know my own name. But ez soon ez I got fairly hold o' the hull thing, and had it put straight in my mind, I sez to myself, Minty Sharpe, sez I, the first thing for you to do now, is to put on yer bonnet and shawl, and trapse over to Jim Bradley's, and help them two womenfolks get dinner for themselves and that sick stranger. And," continued Minty, throwing herself into a chair and fanning her glowing face with her apron, "yer I am!"

"But you have not told me *what* has happened," said Mainwaring, with a constrained smile, and an uneasy glance towards the house.

"That's so," said Minty, with a brilliant laugh. "I clean forgot the hull gist of the thing. Well, we're rich folks now—over thar on Barren Ledge! That onery brother of mine, Richelieu, hez taken some of his specimens over to Jim Bradley to be tested. And Bradley, just to please that child, takes 'em; and not an hour ago Bradley comes running, likety switch, over to Pop to tell him to put up his notices, for the hull of that ledge where the forge stands is a mine o' silver and copper. Afore ye knew it, Lordy! half the folks outer the Summit and the mill was scattered down thar all over it. Richardson—that stranger ez knows you—kem thar too with Jim, and he allows, ef Bradley's essay is right, it's worth more than a hundred thousand dollars ez it stands!"

"I suppose I must congratulate you, Miss Sharpe," said Mainwaring with an attempt at interest, but his attention still preoccupied with the open doorway.

"Oh, *they* know all about it!" said Minty, following the direction of his abstracted eyes with a slight darkening of her own, "I jest kem out o' the kitchen the other way, and Jim sent 'em a note; but I allowed I'd tell *you* myself. Specially ez you was going away to-morrow."

"Who said I was going away to-morrow?" asked Mainwaring uneasily.

"Loo Macy!"

"Ah—she did? But I may change my mind, you know!" he continued, with a faint smile.

Minty shook her curls decisively. "I reckon *she* knows," she said drily, "she's got law and Gospel for wot she says. But yer she comes. Ask her! Look yer, Loo," she added, as the two women appeared at the doorway, with a certain exaggeration

of congratulatory manner that struck Mainwaring as being as artificial and disturbed as his own; "didn't Sir Francis yer say he was going to-morrow?"

"That's what I understood!" returned Louise, with cold astonishment, letting her clear indifferent eyes fall upon Mainwaring. "I do not know that he has changed his mind."

"Unless, as Miss Sharpe is a great capitalist now, she is willing to use her powers of persuasion," added Mrs. Bradley, with a slight acidulous pointing of her usual prim playfulness.

"I reckon Minty Sharpe's the same ez she allus wos, unless more so," returned Minty, with an honest egotism that carried so much conviction to the hearer as to condone its vanity. "But I kem yer to do a day's work, gals, and I allow to pitch in and do it, and not sit yer swoppin' compliments and 'keeping *him* from packin' his duds. Onless," she stopped, and looked

around at the uneasy, unsympathetic circle with a faint tremulousness of lip that belied the brave black eyes above it, "onless I'm in yer way."

The two women sprang forward with a feminine bewildering excess of protestation; and Mainwaring, suddenly pierced through his outer selfish embarrassment to his more honest depths, stammered quickly—

"Look here, Miss Sharpe, if you think of running away again, after having come all the way here to make us share the knowledge of your good fortune and your better heart, by Jove! I'll go back with you."

But here the two women effusively hurried her away from the dangerous proximity of such sympathetic honesty, and a moment later Mainwaring heard her laughing voice, as of old, ringing in the kitchen. And then, as if unconsciously responding to the significant common-sense that lay

in her last allusion to him, he went to his room and grimly began his packing.

He did not again see Louise alone. At their informal luncheon the conversation turned upon the more absorbing topic of the Sharpes' discovery, its extent, and its probable effect upon the fortunes of the locality. He noticed, abstractedly, that both Mrs. Bradley and her cousin showed a real or assumed scepticism of its value. This did not disturb him greatly, except for its intended check upon Minty's enthusiasm. He was more conscious, perhaps—with a faint touch of mortified vanity—that his own contemplated departure was of lesser importance than this local excitement. Yet, in his growing conviction that all was over—if, indeed, it had ever begun—between himself and Louise, he was grateful to this natural diversion of incident which spared them both an interval of embarrassing commonplaces. And, with the suspicion of some indefinable insincerity—either of his

own or Louise's—haunting him, Minty's frank heartiness and outspoken loyalty gave him a strange relief. It seemed to him as if the clear cool breath of the forest had entered with her homely garments, and the steadfast truths of Nature were incarnate in her shining eyes. How far this poetic fancy would have been consistent or even co-existent with any gleam of tenderness or self-forgetfulness in Louise's equally pretty orbs, I leave the satirical feminine reader to determine.

It was late when Bradley at last returned, bringing further and more complete corroboration of the truth of Sharpe's good fortune. Two experts had arrived, one from Pine Flat and another from the Summit, and upon this statement Richardson had offered to purchase an interest in the discovery that would at once enable the blacksmith to develop his mine. "I shouldn't wonder, Mainwaring," he added cheerfully, "if he'd put you

into it, too, and make your eternal fortune."

"With larks falling from the skies all round you, it's a pity *you* couldn't get put into something," said Mrs. Bradley, straightening her pretty brows.

"I'm not a gold-miner, my dear," said Bradley pleasantly.

"Nor a gold-finder," returned his wife, with a cruel little depression of her pink nostrils; "but you can work all night in that stupid mill and then," she added in a low voice, to escape Minty's attention, "spend the whole of the next day examining and following up a boy's discovery that his own relations had been too lazy and too ignorant to understand and profit by. I suppose that next you will be hunting up a site on the *other side* of the Canyon, where somebody else can put up an hotel and ruin your own prospects."

A sensitive shadow of pain quickly dimmed Bradley's glance—not the first or

last time, evidently, for it was gradually bringing out a background of sadness in his intelligent eyes. But the next moment he turned kindly to Mainwaring, and began to deplore the necessity of his early departure, which Richardson had already made known to him with practical and satisfying reasons.

"I hope you won't forget, my dear fellow, that your most really urgent business is to look after your health; and if, hereafter, you'll only remember the old Lookout enough to impress that fact upon you, I shall feel that any poor service I have rendered you has been amply repaid."

Mainwaring, notwithstanding that he winced slightly at this fateful echo of Louise's advice, returned the grasp of his friend's hand with an honest pressure equal to his own. He longed now only for the coming of Richardson, to complete his scheme of grateful benefaction to his host.

The banker came, fortunately as the con-

versation began to flag; and Mrs. Bradley's half-coquettish ill-humour of a pretty woman, and Louise's abstracted indifference, were becoming so noticeable as to even impress Minty into a thoughtful taciturnity. The graciousness of his reception by Mrs. Bradley somewhat restored his former ostentatious gallantry, and his self-satisfied, domineering manner had enough masculine power in it to favourably affect the three women, who, it must be confessed, were a little bored by the finer abstractions of Bradley and Mainwaring. After a few moments, Mainwaring rose and, with a significant glance at Richardson to remind him of his proposed conference with Bradley, turned to leave the room. He was obliged to pass Louise, who was sitting by the table. His attention was suddenly arrested by something in her hand with which she was listlessly playing. It was the stone which he had put on his letter to her.

As he had not been present when Bradley arrived, he did not know that this fateful object had been brought home by his host, who, after receiving it from Richelieu, had put it in his pocket to illustrate his story of the discovery. On the contrary, it seemed that Louise's careless exposure of his foolish stratagem was gratuitously and purposely cruel. Nevertheless, he stopped and looked at her.

"That's a queer stone you have there," he said, in a tone which she recognized as coldly and ostentatiously civil.

"Yes," she replied, without looking up; "it's the outcrop of that mine." She handed it to him as if to obviate any further remark. "I thought you had seen it before."

"The outcrop," he repeated drily. "That is—it—it—it is the indication or sign of something important that's below it—isn't it?"

Louise shrugged her shoulders sceptically.

"It don't follow. It's just as likely to cover rubbish, after you've taken the trouble to look."

"Thanks," he said, with measured gentleness, and passed quietly out of the room.

The moon had already risen when Bradley, with his briar-wood pipe, preceded Richardson upon the veranda. The latter threw his large frame into Louise's rocking-chair near the edge of the abyss; Bradley, with his own chair tilted against the side of the house after the national fashion, waited for him to speak. The absence of Mainwaring and the stimulus of Mrs. Bradley's graciousness had given the banker a certain condescending familiarity, which Bradley received with amused and ironical tolerance that his twinkling eyes made partly visible in the darkness.

"One of the things I wanted to talk to you about, Bradley, was that old affair of the advance you asked for from the Bank. We did not quite see our way to it then,

and, speaking as a business man, it isn't really a matter of business now; but it has lately been put to me in a light that would make the doing of it possible—you understand? The fact of the matter is this: Sir Robert Mainwaring, the father of the young fellow you've got in your house, is one of our directors and largest shareholders, and I can tell you—if you don't suspect it already—you've been lucky, Bradley—deucedly lucky—to have had him in your house, and to have rendered him a service. He's the heir to one of the largest landed estates in his county, one of the oldest county families, and will step into the title some day. But, ahem!" he coughed patronizingly, "you knew all that! No? Well, that charming wife of yours, at least, does; for she's been talking about it. Gad, Bradley, it takes those women to find out anything of that kind, eh?"

The light in Bradley's eyes and his pipe went slowly out together.

"Then we'll say that affair of the advance is as good as settled. It's Sir Robert's wish, you understand—and this young fellow's wish—and if you'll come down to the Bank next week we'll arrange it for you; I think you'll admit they're doing the handsome thing to you and yours. And therefore," he lowered his voice confidentially, "you'll see, Bradley, that it will only be the honourable thing in you, you know, to look upon the affair as finished, and, in fact, to do all you can"—he drew his chair closer—"to—to—to drop this other foolishness."

"I don't think I quite understand you,' said Bradley slowly.

"But your wife does, if you don't," returned Richardson bluntly; "I mean this foolish flirtation between Louise Macy and Mainwaring, which is utterly preposterous. Why, man, it can't possibly come to anything, and it couldn't be allowed for a moment. Look at his position and hers.

I should think, as a practical man, it would strike you——"

"Only one thing strikes me, Richardson," interrupted Bradley in a singularly distinct whisper, rising, and moving nearer the speaker: "it is that you're sitting perilously near the edge of this veranda. For, by the living God, if you don't take yourself out of that chair and out of this house, I won't be answerable for the consequences!"

"Hold on there a minute, will you?" said Mainwaring's voice from the window.

Both men turned towards it. A long leg was protruding from Mainwaring's window; it was quickly followed by the other leg and body of the occupant, and the next moment Mainwaring came towards the two men, with his hands in his pockets.

"Not so loud," he said, looking towards the house.

"Let that man go," said Bradley, in a repressed voice. "You and I, Mainwaring, can speak together afterwards."

"That man must stay until he hears what I have got to say," said Mainwaring, stepping between them. He was very white and grave in the moonlight, but very quiet; and he did not take his hands from his pockets. "I've listened to what he said because he came here on *my* business, which was simply to offer to do you a service. That was all, Bradley, that *I* told him to do. This rot about what he expects of you in return is his own impertinence. If you'd punched his head when he began it, it would have been all right. But since he has begun it, before he goes I think he ought to hear me tell you that I have already *offered* myself to Miss Macy, and she has *refused* me! If she had given me the least encouragement, I should have told you before. Further, I want to say that, in spite of that man's insinuations, I firmly believe that no one is aware of the circumstance except Miss Macy and myself."

"I had no idea of intimating that any-

thing had happened that was not highly honourable and creditable to you and the young lady," began Richardson hurriedly.

"I don't know that it was necessary for you to have any ideas on the subject at all," said Mainwaring sternly; "nor that, having been shown how you have insulted this gentleman and myself, you need trouble us an instant longer with your company. You need not come back. I will manage my other affairs myself."

"Very well, Mr. Mainwaring—but—you may be sure that I shall certainly take the first opportunity to explain myself to Sir Robert," returned Richardson as, with an attempt at dignity, he strode away.

There was an interval of silence.

"Don't be too hard upon a fellow, Bradley," said Mainwaring, as Bradley remained dark and motionless in the shadow. "It is a poor return I'm making you for your kindness, but I swear I never thought of anything like—like—this."

"Nor did I," said Bradley bitterly.

"I know it, and that's what makes it so infernally bad for me. Forgive me, won't you? Think of me, old fellow, as the wretchedest ass you ever met, but not such a cad as this would make me!" As Mainwaring stepped out from the moonlight towards him with extended hand, Bradley finally grasped it.

"Thanks—there—thanks, old fellow! And, Bradley—I say—don't say anything to your wife, for I don't think she knows it. And, Bradley—look here—I didn't like to be anything but plain before that fellow; but I don't mind telling *you*, now that it's all over, that I really think Louise—Miss Macy—didn't altogether understand me either."

With another shake of the hand they separated for the night. For a long time after Mainwaring had gone, Bradley remained gazing thoughtfully into the Great Canyon. He thought of the time when

he had first come there, full of life and enthusiasm, making an ideal world of his pure and wholesome eyrie on the ledge. What else he thought will, probably, never be known until the misunderstanding of honourable and chivalrous men by a charming and illogical sex shall be analysed and explained by some more daring romancer.

When he returned to the house, he said kindly to his wife, "I have been thinking to-day about your hotel scheme, and I shall write to Sacramento to-night to accept that capitalist's offer."

Part II.

CHAPTER I.

THE sun was just rising. In two years of mutation and change it had seen the little cottage, clinging like a swallow's nest to the rocky eaves of a great Sierran canyon, give way to a straggling, many galleried hotel; and a dozen blackened chimneys rise above the barren tableland where once had stood the lonely forge. To that conservative orb of light and heat there must have been a peculiar satisfaction in looking down a few hours earlier upon the battlements and gables of Oldenhurst, whose base was deeply embedded in the matured foundations and settled traditions of an English county. For the rising sun had for the last ten centuries found Oldenhurst in its place,

from the heavy stone terrace that covered the dead-and-forgotten wall where a Roman sentinel had once paced, to the little grating in the cloistered quadrangle, where it had seen a Cistercian brother place the morning dole. It had daily welcomed the growth of this vast and picturesque excrescence of the times; it had smiled every morning upon this formidable yet quaint incrustation of power and custom, ignoring, as Oldenhurst itself had ignored, the generations who possessed it, the men who built it, the men who carried it with fire and sword, the men who had lied and cringed for it, the king who had given it to a favourite, the few brave hearts who had died for it in exile, and the one or two who had bought and paid for it. For Oldenhurst had absorbed all these and more until it had become a story of the past, incarnate in stone, greenwood, and flower; it had even drained the life-blood from adjacent hamlets, repaying them with

tumuli growths like its own, in the shape of purposeless lodges, quaintly incompetent hospitals and schools, and churches where the inestimable blessing and knowledge of *its* gospel were taught and fostered. Nor had it dealt more kindly with the gentry within its walls, sending some to the scaffold, pillorying others in infamous office, reducing a few to poverty, and halting its later guests with gout and paralysis. It had given them in exchange the dubious immortality of a portrait gallery, from which they stared with stony and equal resignation; it had preserved their useless armour and accoutrements; it had set up their marble effigies in churches or laid them in cross-legged attitudes to trip up the unwary, until in death, as in life, they got between the congregation and the truth that was taught there. It had allowed an 'Oldenhurst crusader, with a broken nose like a pugilist, on the strength of his having been twice to the

Holy Land, to hide the beautifully illuminated Word from the lowlier worshipper on the humbler benches; it had sent an iconoclastic Bishop of the Reformation to a nearer minster to ostentatiously occupy the place of the consecrated image he had overthrown. Small wonder that crowding the Oldenhurst retainers gradually into smaller space, with occasional Sabbath glimpses of the living rulers of Oldenhurst already in railed-off exaltation, it had forced them to accept Oldenhurst as a synonym of eternity, and left the knowledge of a higher Power to what time they should be turned out to their longer sleep under the tender grass of the beautiful outer churchyard.

And even thus, while every stone of the pile of Oldenhurst and every tree in its leafy park might have been eloquent with the story of vanity, selfishness, and unequal justice, it had been left to the infinite mercy of Nature to seal their lips with a spell of beauty that left mankind equally dumb;

earth, air, and moisture had entered into a gentle conspiracy to soften, mellow, and clothe its external blemishes of breach and accident, its irregular design, its additions, accretions, ruins, and lapses with a harmonious charm of outline and colour ; poets, romancers, and historians had equally conspired to illuminate the dark passages and uglier inconsistencies of its interior life with the glamour of their own fancy. The fragment of menacing keep, with its choked oubliettes, became a bower of tender ivy; the grim story of its crimes, properly edited by a contemporary bard of the family, passed into a charming ballad. Even the superstitious darkness of its religious house had escaped through fallen roof and shattered wall, leaving only the foliated and sun-pierced screen of front, with its rose-window and pinnacle of cross behind. Pilgrims from all lands had come to see it ; fierce Republicans had crossed the seas to gaze at its mediæval outlines, and copy

them in wood and stucco on their younger soil. Politicians had equally pointed to it as a convincing evidence of their own principles and in refutation of each other; and it had survived both. For it was this belief in its own perpetuity that was its strength and weakness. And that belief was never stronger than on this bright August morning, when it was on the verge of dissolution. A telegram brought to Sir Robert Mainwaring had even then as completely shattered and disintegrated Oldenhurst, in all it was and all it meant, as if the brown-paper envelope had been itself charged with the electric fluid.

Sir Robert Mainwaring, whose family had for three centuries possessed Oldenhurst, had received the news of his financial ruin; and the vast pile which had survived the repeated invasion of superstition, force, intrigue, and even progress, had succumbed to a foe its founders and proprietors had loftily ignored and left to Jews and traders.

The acquisition of money, except by despoilment, gift, Royal favour, or inheritance, had been unknown at Oldenhurst. The present degenerate custodian of its fortunes, staggering under the weight of its sentimental mortmain already alluded to, had speculated in order to keep up its material strength, which was gradually shrinking through impoverished land and the ruined trade it had despised. He had invested largely in California mines, and was the chief shareholder in a San Francisco Bank. But the mines had proved worthless, the Bank had that morning suspended payment, owing to the failure of a large land and timber company on the Sierras, which it had imprudently "carried." The spark which had demolished Oldenhurst had been fired from the new telegraph-station in the hotel above the great Sierran canyon.

There was a large house-party at Oldenhurst that morning. But it had been a

part of the history of the Mainwarings to accept defeat gallantly and as became their blood. Sir Percival—the second gentleman on the left as you entered the library—unhorsed, dying on a distant moor, with a handful of followers, abandoned by a charming Prince and a miserable cause, was scarcely a greater hero than this ruined but undaunted gentleman of eighty, entering the breakfast-room a few hours later as jauntily as his gout would permit, and conscientiously dispensing the hospitalities of his crumbling house. When he had arranged a few pleasure parties for the day, and himself thoughtfully anticipated the different tastes of his guests, he turned to Lady Mainwaring.

"Don't forget that somebody ought to go to the station to meet the Bradleys. Frank writes from St. Moritz that they are due here to-day."

Lady Mainwaring glanced quickly at her husband, and said *sotto voce*, "Do you think

they'll care to come *now?* They probably have heard all about it."

"Not how it affects me," returned Sir Robert, in the same tone; "and as they might think that because Frank was with them on that California mountain we would believe it had something to do with Richardson involving the Bank in that wretched company, we must really *insist* upon their coming."

"Bradley!" echoed the Hon. Captain FitzHarry, overhearing the name during a late forage on the sideboard. "Bradley!—there was an awfully pretty American at Biarritz, travelling with a cousin, I think—a Miss Mason or Macy. Those sort of people, you know, who have a companion as pretty as themselves: bring you down with the other barrel if one misses—eh? Very clever, both of them, and hardly any accent."

"Mr. Bradley was a very dear friend of Frank's, and most kind to him," said Lady Mainwaring gravely.

"Didn't know there *was* a Mr. Bradley, really. He didn't come to the fore then," said the unabashed Captain. "Deuced hard to follow up those American husbands!"

"And their wives wouldn't thank you, if you did," said Lady Griselda Armiger, with a sweet smile.

"If it is the Mrs. Bradley I mean," said Lady Canterbridge from the lower end of the table, looking up from her letter, "who looks a little like Mrs. Summertree, and has a pretty cousin with her who wears very good frocks, I'm afraid you won't be able to get her down here. She's booked with engagements for the next six weeks. She and her cousin made all the running at Grigsby Royal, and she has quite deposed that other American beauty in Northforeland's good graces. She regularly *affiché'd* him, and it is piteous to see him follow her about. No, my dear; I don't believe they'll come to any one of less rank than a Marquis. If

they did, I'm sure Canterbridge would have had them at Buckenthorpe already."

"I wonder if there was ever anything in Frank's admiration of this Miss Macy?" said Lady Mainwaring a few moments later, lingering beside her husband in his study.

"I really don't know," said Sir Robert abstractedly; "his letters were filled with her praises, and Richardson thought——"

"Pray don't mention that man's name again," said Lady Mainwaring, with the first indication of feeling she had shown. "I shouldn't trust him."

"But why do you ask?" returned her husband.

Lady Mainwaring was silent for a moment. "She is very rich, I believe," she said slowly. "At least, Frank writes that some neighbours of theirs whom he met in the Engadine told him they had sold the site of that absurd cottage where he was ill for some extravagant sum."

"My dear Geraldine," said the old man affectionately, taking his wife's hand in his own, that now for the first time trembled, "if you have any hope based upon what you are thinking of now, let it be the last and least. You forget that Paget told us that with the best care he could scarcely ensure Frank's return to perfect health. Even if God in His mercy spared him long enough to take my place, what girl would be willing to tie herself to a man doomed to sickness and poverty? Hardly the one you speak of, my dear."

Lady Canterbridge proved a true prophet. Mrs. Bradley and Miss Macy did not come, regretfully alleging a previous engagement made on the Continent with the Duke of Northforeland and the Marquis of Dungeness; but the unexpected and apocryphal husband *did* arrive. "I have not seen my family," he said, "since I returned from visiting your son in Switzerland. I am glad they were able to amuse

themselves without waiting for me at a London hotel, though I should prefer to have found them here." Sir Robert and Lady Mainwaring were courteous but slightly embarrassed. Lady Canterbridge, who had come to the station in bored curiosity, raised her clear blue eyes to his. He did not look like a fool, a complaisant or fashionably cynical husband—this well-dressed, well-mannered, but quietly and sympathetically observant man. Did he really care for his selfish wife? was it perfect trust or some absurd Transatlantic custom? She did not understand him. It wearied her and she turned her eyes indifferently away. Bradley, a little irritated, he knew not why, at the scrutiny of this tall, handsome, gentlemanly looking woman, who, however, in spite of her broad shoulders and narrow hips possessed a refined muliebrity superior to mere liberality of contour, turned slightly towards Sir Robert. "Lady Canterbridge,

Frank's cousin," explained Sir Robert hesitatingly, as if conscious of some vague awkwardness. Bradley and Lady Canterbridge both bowed—possibly the latter's salutation was the most masculine—and Bradley, eventually forgetting her presence, plunged into an earnest, sympathetic, and intelligent account of the condition in which he had found the invalid at St. Moritz. The old man at first listened with an almost perfunctory courtesy and a hesitating reserve; but as Bradley was lapsing into equal reserve and they drove up to the gates of the quadrangle, he unexpectedly warmed with a word or two of serious welcome. Looking up with a half-unconscious smile, Bradley met Lady Canterbridge's examining eyes.

The next morning, finding an opportunity to be alone with him, Bradley, with a tactful mingling of sympathy and directness, informed his host that he was cognisant of the disaster that had over-

taken the Bank, and delicately begged him to accept of any service he could render him. "Pardon me," he said, "if I speak as plainly to you as I would to your son; my friendship for him justifies an equal frankness to any one he loves; but I should not intrude upon your confidence if I did not believe that my knowledge and assistance might be of benefit to you. Although *I* did not sell my lands to Richardson or approve of his methods," he continued, "I fear it was some suggestion of mine that eventually induced him to form the larger and more disastrous scheme that ruined the Bank. So you see," he added lightly, "I claim a right to offer you my services." Touched by Bradley's sincerity and discreet intelligence, Sir Robert was equally frank. During the recital of his Californian investments—a chronicle of almost fatuous speculation and imbecile enterprise—Bradley was profoundly moved at the naïve

ignorance of business and hopeless ingenuousness of this old habitué of a cynical world and an insincere society, to whom no financial scheme had been too wild for acceptance. As Bradley listened with a half-saddened smile to the grave visions of this aged enthusiast, he remembered the son's unsophisticated simplicity; what he had considered as the "boyishness" of immaturity was the taint of the utterly unpractical Mainwaring blood. It was upon this blood, and others like it, that Oldenhurst had for centuries waxed and fattened.

Bradley was true to his promise of assistance, and with the aid of two or three of his brother millionaires, whose knowledge of the resources of the locality was no less powerful and convincing than the security of their actual wealth, managed to stay the immediate action of the catastrophe until the affairs of the Sierran Land and Timber Company could be

examined and some plan of reconstruction arranged. During this interval of five months, in which the credit of Sir Robert Mainwaring was preserved with the secret of his disaster, Bradley was a frequent and welcome visitor to Oldenhurst. Apart from his strange and chivalrous friendship for the Mainwarings — which was as incomprehensible to Sir Robert as Sir Robert's equally eccentric and Quixotic speculations had been to Bradley—he began to feel a singular and weird fascination for the place. A patient martyr in the vast London house he had taken for his wife and cousin's amusement, he loved to escape the loneliness of its autumn solitude or the occasional greater loneliness of his wife's social triumphs. The handsome, thoughtful man who sometimes appeared at the foot of his wife's table or melted away like a well-bred ghost in the hollow emptiness of her brilliant receptions, piqued the languid curiosity of a few.

A distinguished personage, known for his tactful observance of *convenances* that others forgot, had made a point of challenging this gentlemanly apparition, and had followed it up with courteous civilities, which led to exchange of much respect but no increase of acquaintance. He had even spent a week at Buckenthorpe, with Canterbridge in the coverts and Lady Canterbridge in the music-room and library. He had returned more thoughtful, and for some time after was more frequent in his appearances at home, and more earnest in his renewed efforts to induce his wife to return to America with him.

"You'll never be happy anywhere but in California, among those common people," she replied; "and while I was willing to share your poverty *there*," she added drily, "I prefer to share your wealth among civilized ladies and gentlemen. Besides," she continued, "we must consider Louise.

She is as good as engaged to Lord Dunshunner, and I do not intend that you shall make a mess of her affairs here as you did in California."

It was the first time he had heard of Lord Dunshunner's proposals; it was the first allusion she had ever made to Louise and Mainwaring.

Meantime, the autumn leaves had fallen silently over the broad terraces of Oldenhurst with little changes to the fortunes of the great house itself. The Christmas house-party included Lady Canterbridge, whose husband was still detained at Homburg in company with Dunshunner; and Bradley, whose wife and cousin lingered on the Continent. He was slightly embarrassed when Lady Canterbridge turned to him one afternoon as they were returning from the lake and congratulated him abruptly upon Louise's engagement.

"Perhaps you don't care to be congratulated," she said, as he did not immediately

respond, "and you had as little to do with it as with that other? It is a woman's function."

"What other?" echoed Bradley.

Lady Canterbridge slightly turned her handsome head towards him as she walked unbendingly at his side. "Tell me how you manage to keep your absolute simplicity so fresh. Do you suppose it wasn't known at Oldenhurst that Frank had quite compromised himself with Miss Macy over there?"

"It certainly was not known 'over there,'" said Bradley curtly.

"Don't be angry with me."

Such an appeal from the tall, indifferent woman at his side, so confidently superior to criticism, and uttered in a lower tone, made him smile, albeit uneasily.

"I only meant to congratulate you," she continued carelessly. "Dunshunner is not a bad sort of fellow, and will come into a good property some day. And then, society

is so made up of caprice, just now, that it is well for your wife's cousin to make the most of her opportunities while they last. She is very popular now; but next season——" Seeing that Bradley remained silent, she did not finish her sentence, but said with her usual abruptness, "Do you know a Miss Araminta Eulalie Sharpe?"

Bradley started. Could any one recognize honest Minty in the hopeless vulgarity which this fine lady had managed to carelessly import into her name? His eye kindled.

"She is an old friend of mine, Lady Canterbridge."

"How fortunate! Then I can please you by giving you good news of her. She is the coming sensation. They say she is very rich, but quite one of the people, you know: in fact, she makes no scruples of telling you her father was a blacksmith, I think, and takes the dear old man with her everywhere. FitzHarry raves about her,

and says her *naïveté* is something too delicious. She is regularly in with some of the best people already. Lady Dungeness has taken her up, and Northforeland is only waiting for your cousin's engagement to be able to go over decently. Shall I ask her to Buckenthorpe ?—come, now, as an apology for my rudeness to your cousin ?" She was very womanly now in spite of her high collar, her straight back, and her tightly fitting jacket, as she stood there smiling. Suddenly, her smile faded; she drew her breath in quickly.

She had caught a glimpse of his usually thoughtful face and eyes, now illuminated with some pleasant memory.

"Thank you," he said smilingly, yet with a certain hesitation, as he thought of The Lookout and Araminta Eulalie Sharpe, and tried to reconcile them with the lady before him. "I should like it very much."

"Then you have known Miss Sharpe a

long time?" continued Lady Canterbridge as they walked on.

"While we were at The Lookout she was our nearest neighbour."

"And I suppose your wife will consider it quite proper for you to see her again at my house?" said Lady Canterbridge, with a return of conventional levity.

"Oh! quite," said Bradley.

They had reached the low Norman-arched side-entrance to the quadrangle. As Bradley swung open the bolt-studded oaken door to let her pass, she said carelessly—

"Then you are not coming in now?"

"No; I shall walk a little longer."

"And I am quite forgiven?"

"I am thanking you very much," he said, smiling directly into her blue eyes. She lowered them, and vanished into the darkness of the passage.

The news of Minty's success was further corroborated by Sir Robert, who later that

evening called Bradley into the study. "Frank has been writing from Nice that he has renewed his acquaintance with some old Californian friends of yours—a Mr. and Miss Sharpe. Lady Canterbridge says that they are well known in London to some of our friends, but I would like to ask you something about them. Lady Mainwaring was on the point of inviting them here when I received a letter from Mr. Sharpe asking for a *business* interview. Pray, who is this Sharpe?"

"You say he writes for a *business* interview?" asked Bradley.

"Yes."

Bradley hesitated for a moment and then said quietly, "Perhaps, then, I am justified in a breach of confidence to him, in order to answer your question. He is the man who has assumed all the liabilities of the Sierran Land and Timber Company to enable the Bank to resume payment. But he did it on the condition that you were never to

know it. For the rest, he was a blacksmith who made a fortune, as Lady Canterbridge will tell you."

"How very odd—how kind, I mean! I should like to have been civil to him on Frank's account alone."

"I should see him on business and be civil to him afterwards." Sir Robert received the American's levity with his usual seriousness.

"No, they must come here for Christmas. His daughter is——"

"Araminta Eulalie Sharpe," said Bradley, in defiant memory of Lady Canterbridge.

Sir Robert winced audibly. "I shall rely on you, my dear boy, to help me make it pleasant for them," he said.

Christmas came, but not Minty. It drew a large contingent from Oldenhurst to the quaint old church, who came to view the green-wreathed monuments, and walls spotted with crimson berries, as if with the blood of former Oldenhurst warriors, and

to impress the wondering villagers with the ineffable goodness and bounty of the Creator towards the Lords of Oldenhurst and their friends. Sir Robert, a little gouty, kept the house, and Bradley, somewhat uneasy at the Sharpes' absence, but more distrait with other thoughts, wandered listlessly in the long library. At the lower angle it was embayed into the octagon space of a former tower, which was furnished as a quaint recess for writing or study, pierced through its enormous walls with a lance-shaped window, hidden by heavy curtains. He was gazing abstractedly at the melancholy eyes of Sir Percival, looking down from the dark panel opposite, when he heard the crisp rustle of a skirt. Lady Canterbridge, tightly and stiffly buttoned in black from her long narrow boots to her slim white-collared neck, stood beside him with a prayer-book in her ungloved hand. Bradley coloured quickly; the penetrating incense of the Christmas boughs and branches that

decked the walls and ceilings, mingling with some indefinable intoxicating aura from the woman at his side, confused his senses. He seemed to be losing himself in some forgotten past coeval with the long, quaintly lighted room, the rich hangings, and the painted ancestor of this handsome woman. He recovered himself with an effort, and said, "You are going to church?"

"I may meet them coming home; it's all the same. You like *him?*" she said abruptly, pointing to the portrait. "I thought you did not care for that sort of man over there."

"A man like that must have felt the impotence of his sacrifice before he died, and that condoned everything," said Bradley thoughtfully.

"Then you don't think him a fool? Bob says it was a fair bargain for a title and an office, and that by dying he escaped trial and the confiscation of what he had."

Bradley did not reply.

"I am disturbing your illusions again." Yet I rather like them. I think you are quite capable of a sacrifice—perhaps you know what it is already."

He felt that she was looking at him; he felt equally that he could not respond with a commonplace. He was silent.

"I have offended you again, Mr. Bradley," she said. "Please be Christian, and pardon me. You know this is a season of peace and goodwill." She raised her blue eyes at the same moment to the Christmas decorations on the ceiling. They were standing before the parted drapery of the lance window. Midway between the arched curtains hung a spray of mistletoe—the conceit of a mischievous housemaid. Their eyes met it simultaneously.

Bradley had Lady Canterbridge's slim, white hand in his own. The next moment voices were heard in the passage, and the door nearly opposite to them opened deliberately. The idea of their apparent

seclusion and half compromising attitude flashed through the minds of both at the same time. Lady Canterbridge stepped quickly backward, drawing Bradley with her, into the embrasure of the window; the folds of the curtain swung together and concealed them from view.

The door had been opened by the footman, ushering in a broad-shouldered man, who was carrying a travelling-bag and an umbrella in his hand. Dropping into an armchair before the curtain he waved away the footman, who, even now, mechanically repeated a previously vain attempt to relieve the stranger of his luggage.

"You leave that 'ere grip sack where it is, young man, and tell Sir Robert Mainwaring that Mr. Demander Sharpe, of Californy, wishes to see him—on business—on *business*, do ye hear? You hang onter that sentence—*on business!* it's about ez much ez you kin carry, I reckon, and leave that grip sack alone."

From behind the curtain Bradley made a sudden movement to go forward; but Lady Canterbridge—now quite pale but collected—restrained him with a warning movement of her hand. Sir Robert's stick and halting step were next heard along the passage, and he entered the room. His simple and courteous greeting of the stranger was instantly followed by a renewed attack upon the "grip sack," and a renewed defence of it by the stranger.

"No, Sir Robert," said the voice argumentatively, "this yer's a *business* interview, and until it's over—if *you* please—we'll remain ez we air. I'm Demander Sharpe, of Californy, and I and my darter, Minty, oncet had the pleasure of knowing your boy over thar, and of meeting him agin the other day at Nice."

"I think," said Sir Robert's voice gently, "that these are not the only claims you have upon me. I have only a day or two

ago heard from Mr. Bradley that I owe to your generous hands and your disinterested liberality the saving of my California fortune."

There was the momentary sound of a pushed-back chair, a stamping of feet, and then Mr. Sharpe's voice rose high with the blacksmith's old querulous aggrieved utterance:

"So it's that finikin', conceited Bradley agin—that's giv' me away! Ef that man's all-fired belief in his being the Angel Gabriel and Dan'l Webster rolled inter one don't beat anythin'! I suppose that high-flyin' jay-bird kalkilated to put you and me and my gal and yer boy inter harness for his four-hoss chariot and he sittin' kam on the box drivin' us! Why don't he 'tend to his own business, and look arter his own concerns—instead o' leaving Jinny Bradley and Loo Macy dependent on Kings and Queens and titled folks gen'rally, and he, Jim Bradley, philanderin' with another

man's wife—while that thar man is hard at work tryin' to make a honest livin' fer his wife, buckin' agin' faro an' the tiger gen'rally at Monaco! Eh? And that man a-intermeddlin' with me! Ef," continued the voice dropped to a tone of hopeless moral conviction, "Ef there's a man I mor'lly despise — it's that finikin' Jim Bradley."

"You quite misunderstand me, my dear sir," said Sir Robert's hurried voice; "he told me you had pledged him to secrecy, and he only revealed it to explain why you wished to see me."

There was a grunt of half-placated wrath from Sharpe, and then the voice resumed, but more deliberately, "Well, to come back to business: you've got a boy, Francis, and I've got a darter, Araminty. They've sorter taken a shine to each other and they want to get married. Mind yer—wait a moment!—it wasn't allus so. No, sir; when my gal Araminty first seed your boy

in Californy she was poor, and she didn't kalkilate to get into anybody's family unbeknownst or on sufferance. Then she got rich and you got poor; and then—hold on a minit!—she allows, does my girl, that there aint any nearer chance o' their making a match than they were afore, for she isn't goin' to hev it said that she married your son fur the chance of some day becomin' Lady Mainwaring."

"One moment, Mr. Sharpe," said the voice of the Baronet gravely: "I am both flattered and pained by what I believe to be the kindly object of your visit. Indeed, I may say I have gathered a suspicion of what might be the sequel of this most unhappy acquaintance of my son and your daughter; but I cannot believe that he has kept you in ignorance of his unfortunate prospects and his still more unfortunate state of health."

"When I told ye to hold on a minit," continued the blacksmith's voice, with a

touch of querulousness in its accent, "that was jist wot I was comin' to. I knowed part of it from my own pocket, she knowed the rest of it from his lips and the doctors she interviewed. And then she says to me—sez my girl Minty—'Pop,' she sez, 'he's got nothing to live for now but his title, and that he never may live to get, so that I think ye kin jist go, Pop, and fairly and squarely, as a honest man, ask his father to let me hev him.' Them's my darter's own words, Sir Robert; and when I tell yer that she's got a million o' dollars to back them, ye'll know she means business every time."

"Did Francis know that you were coming here?"

"Bless ye, no! He don't know that she would have him. Ef it kem to that, he aint even asked her! She wouldn't let him until she was sure of *you*."

"Then you mean to say there is no engagement?"

"In course not. I reckoned to do the square thing first with ye."

The halting step of the baronet crossing the room was heard distinctly. He had stopped beside Sharpe. "My dear Mr. Sharpe," he said, in a troubled voice, "I cannot permit this sacrifice. It is too—too great!"

"Then," said Sharpe's voice querulously, "I'm afraid we must do without your permission. I didn't reckon to find a sort o' British Jim Bradley in you. If *you* can't permit my darter to sacrifice herself by marryin' your son, I can't permit her to sacrifice her love and him by *not* marryin' him. So I reckon this yer interview is over."

"I am afraid we are both old fools, Mr. Sharpe; but—we will talk this over with Lady Mainwaring. Come." There was evidently a slight struggle near the chair over some inanimate object. But the next moment the Baronet's voice rose, per-

suasively, "Really, I must insist upon relieving you of your bag and umbrella."

"Well, if you'll let me telegraph 'yes' to Minty, I don't care if yer do."

When the room was quiet again, Lady Canterbridge and James Bradley silently slipped from the curtain, and, without a word, separated at the door.

There was a merry Christmas at Oldenhurst and at Nice. But whether Minty's loving sacrifice was accepted or not, or whether she ever reigned as Lady Mainwaring, or lived an untitled widow, I cannot say. But as Oldenhurst still exists in all its pride and power, it is presumed that the peril that threatened its fortunes was averted, and that if another heroine was not found worthy of a frame in its picture-gallery, at least it had been sustained as of old by devotion and renunciation.

A DRIFT FROM REDWOOD CAMP.

A DRIFT FROM REDWOOD CAMP.

THEY had all known him as a shiftless, worthless creature. From the time he first entered Redwood Camp, carrying his entire effects in a red handkerchief on the end of a long-handled shovel, until he lazily drifted out of it on a plank in the terrible inundation of 1856, they never expected anything better of him. In a community of strong men with sullen virtues and dangerously fascinating vices, he was tolerated as possessing neither—not even rising by any dominant human weakness or ludicrous quality to the importance of a butt. In the *dramatis*

personæ of Redwood Camp he was a simple "super"—who had only passive, speechless rôles in those fierce dramas that were sometimes unrolled beneath its green-curtained pines. Nameless and penniless, he was overlooked by the census and ignored by the tax collector, while in a hotly contested election for sheriff, when even the head-boards of the scant cemetery were consulted to fill the poll-lists, it was discovered that neither candidate had thought fit to avail himself of his actual vote. He was debarred the rude heraldry of a nickname of achievement, and in a camp made up of "Euchre Bills," "Poker Dicks," "Profane Pete," and "Snapshot Harry," was known vaguely as "him," "Skeesicks," or "that coot." It was remembered long after, with a feeling of superstition, that he had never even met with the dignity of an accident, nor received the fleeting honour of a chance shot meant for somebody else in any of the liberal and

broadly comprehensive encounters which distinguished the camp. And the inundation that finally carried him out of it was partly anticipated by his passive incompetency, for while the others escaped—or were drowned in escaping—he calmly floated off on his plank without an opposing effort.

For all that Elijah Martin—which was his real name—was far from being unamiable or repellent. That he was cowardly, untruthful, selfish, and lazy, was undoubtedly the fact; perhaps it was his peculiar misfortune that, just then, courage, frankness, generosity, and activity were the dominant factors in the life of Redwood Camp. His submissive gentleness, his unquestioned modesty, his half refinement, and his amiable exterior consequently availed him nothing against the fact that he was missed during a raid of the Digger Indians, and lied to account for it; or that he lost his right to a gold discovery by failing to make it good against a

bully, and selfishly kept this discovery from the knowledge of the camp. Yet this weakness awakened no animosity in his companions, and it is probable that the indifference of the camp to his fate in this final catastrophe came purely from a simple forgetfulness of one who at that supreme moment was weakly incapable.

Such was the reputation and such the antecedents of the man who, on the 15th of March, 1856, found himself adrift in a swollen tributary of the Minyo. A spring freshet of unusual volume had flooded the adjacent river until, bursting its bounds, it escaped through the narrow, wedge-shaped valley that held Redwood Camp. For a day and a night the surcharged river poured half its waters through the straggling camp. At the end of that time every vestige of the little settlement was swept away; all that was left was scattered far and wide in the country, caught in the hanging branches of water-side

willows and alders, embayed in sluggish pools, dragged over submerged meadows, and one fragment—bearing up Elijah Martin—pursuing the devious courses of an unknown tributary fifty miles away. Had he been a rash, impatient man, he would have been speedily drowned in some earlier desperate attempt to reach the shore; had he been an ordinarily bold man, he would have succeeded in transferring himself to the branches of some obstructing tree; but he was neither, and he clung to his broken raft-like berth with an endurance that was half the paralysis of terror and half the patience of habitual misfortune. Eventually he was caught in a side current, swept to the bank, and cast ashore on an unexplored wilderness.

His first consciousness was one of hunger, that usurped any sentiment of gratitude for his escape from drowning. As soon as his cramped limbs permitted, he crawled out of the bushes in search of food. He

did not know where he was; there was no sign of habitation—or even occupation—anywhere. He had been too terrified to notice the direction in which he had drifted—even if he had possessed the ordinary knowledge of a backwoodsman, which he did not. He was helpless. In his bewildered state, seeing a squirrel cracking a nut on the branch of a hollow tree near him, he made a half-frenzied dart at the frightened animal, which ran away. But the same association of ideas in his torpid and confused brain impelled him to search for the squirrel's hoard in the hollow of the tree. He ate the few hazel-nuts he found there ravenously. The purely animal instinct satisfied, he seemed to have borrowed from it a certain animal strength and intuition. He limped through the thicket not unlike some awkward, shy quadrumane, stopping here and there to peer out through the openings over the marshes that lay beyond. His sight, hear-

ing, and even the sense of smell had become preternaturally acute. It was the latter which suddenly arrested his steps with the odour of dried fish. It had a significance beyond the mere instincts of hunger—it indicated the contiguity of some Indian encampment. And as such—it meant danger, torture, and death.

He stopped, trembled violently, and tried to collect his scattered senses. Redwood Camp had embroiled itself needlessly and brutally with the surrounding Indians, and only held its own against them by reckless courage and unerring marksmanship. The frequent use of a casual wandering Indian as a target for the practising rifles of its members had kept up an undying hatred in the heart of the aborigines and stimulated them to terrible and isolated reprisals. The scalped and skinned dead body of Jack Trainer, tied on his horse and held hideously upright by a cross of wood behind his saddle, had passed, one night, a slow and ghastly

apparition, into camp; the corpse of Dick Ryner had been found anchored on the river-bed, disembowelled and filled with stone and gravel. The solitary and unprotected member of Redwood Camp who fell into the enemy's hands was doomed.

Elijah Martin remembered this, but his fears gradually began to subside in a certain apathy of the imagination, which, perhaps, dulled his apprehensions and allowed the instinct of hunger to become again uppermost. He knew that the low bark tents, or wigwams, of the Indians were hung with strips of dried salmon, and his whole being was now centred upon an attempt to stealthily procure a delicious morsel. As yet he had distinguished no other sign of life or habitation; a few moments later, however, and grown bolder with an animal-like trustfulness in his momentary security, he crept out of the thicket and found himself near a long, low mound or burrow-like structure of mud and bark on the river-

bank. A single narrow opening, not unlike the entrance of an Esquimaux hut, gave upon the river. Martin had no difficulty in recognizing the character of the building. It was a "sweat-house," an institution common to nearly all the aboriginal tribes of California. Half a religious temple, it was also half a sanitary asylum, was used as a Russian bath or superheated vault, from which the braves, sweltering and stifling all night, by smothered fires, at early dawn plunged, perspiring, into the ice-cold river. The heat and smoke were further utilized to dry and cure the long strips of fish hanging from the roof, and it was through the narrow aperture that served as a chimney that the odour escaped which Martin had detected. He knew that, as the bathers only occupied the house from midnight to early morn, it was now probably empty. He advanced confidently toward it.

He was a little surprised to find that the small open space between it and the river

was occupied by a rude scaffolding, like that on which certain tribes exposed their dead, but in this instance it only contained the feathered leggings, fringed blanket, and eagle-plumed head-dress of some brave. He did not, however, linger in this plainly visible area, but quickly dropped on all-fours and crept into the interior of the house. Here he completed his feast with the fish, and warmed his chilled limbs on the embers of the still smouldering fires. It was while drying his tattered clothes and shoeless feet that he thought of the dead brave's useless leggings and moccasins, and it occurred to him that he would be less likely to attract the Indians' attention from a distance and provoke a ready arrow, if he were disguised as one of them. Crawling out again, he quickly secured, not only the leggings, but the blanket and head-dress, and putting them on, cast his own clothes into the stream. A bolder, more energetic, or more provident man would

have followed the act by quickly making his way back to the thicket to reconnoitre, taking with him a supply of fish for future needs. But Elijah Martin succumbed again to the recklessness of inertia; he yielded once more to the animal instinct of momentary security. He returned to the interior of the hut, curled himself again on the ashes, and weakly resolving to sleep until moonrise, and as weakly hesitating, ended by falling into uneasy but helpless stupor.

When he awoke, the rising sun, almost level with the low entrance to the sweat-house, was darting its direct rays into the interior, as if searching it with fiery spears. He had slept ten hours. He rose tremblingly to his knees. Everything was quiet without; he might yet escape. He crawled to the opening. The open space before it was empty, but the scaffolding was gone. The clear, keen air revived him. As he sprang out, erect, a shout that nearly stunned him seemed to rise from the earth

on all sides. He glanced around him in a helpless agony of fear. A dozen concentric circles of squatting Indians, whose heads were visible above the reeds, encompassed the banks around the sunken base of the sweat-house with successive dusky rings. Every avenue of escape seemed closed. Perhaps for that reason the attitude of his surrounding captors was passive rather than aggressive, and the shrewd, half-Hebraic profiles nearest him expressed only stoical waiting. There was a strange similarity of expression in his own immovable apathy of despair. His only sense of averting his fate was a confused idea of explaining his intrusion. His desperate memory yielded a few common Indian words. He pointed automatically to himself and the stream. His white lips moved.

"I come—from—the river!"

A guttural cry, as if the whole assembly were clearing their throats, went round the different circles. The nearest rocked them-

selves to and fro and bent their feathered heads toward him. A hollow-cheeked, decrepit old man arose and said, simply:

"It is he! The great chief has come!"

* * * *

He was saved. More than that, he was re-created. For, by signs and intimations he was quickly made aware that since the death of their late chief, their medicine-men had prophesied that his perfect successor should appear miraculously before them, borne noiselessly on the river *from the sea*, in the plumes and insignia of his predecessor. This mere coincidence of appearance and costume might not have been convincing to the braves had not Elijah Martin's actual deficiencies contributed to their unquestioned faith in him. Not only his inert possession of the sweat-house and his apathetic attitude in their presence, but his utter and complete unlikeness to the white frontiersmen of their knowledge and tradition—creatures of fire and sword and

malevolent activity—as well as his manifest dissimilarity to themselves, settled their conviction of his supernatural origin. His gentle, submissive voice, his yielding will, his lazy helplessness, the absence of strange weapons and fierce explosives in his possession, his unwonted sobriety—all proved him an exception to his apparent race that was in itself miraculous. For it must be confessed that, in spite of the cherished theories of most romances and all statesmen and commanders, that *fear* is the great civilizer of the savage barbarian, and that he is supposed to regard the prowess of the white man and his mysterious death-dealing weapons as evidence of his supernatural origin and superior creation, the facts have generally pointed to the reverse. Elijah Martin was not long in discovering that when the Minyo hunter, with his obsolete bow, dropped dead by a bullet from a viewless and apparently noiseless space, it was *not* considered the lightnings of an avenging

Deity, but was traced directly to the ambushed rifle of Kansas Joe, swayed by a viciousness quite as human as their own; the spectacle of Blizzard Dick, verging on *delirium tremens*, and riding "amuck" into an Indian village with a revolver in each hand, did *not* impress them as a supernatural act, nor excite their respectful awe as much as the less harmful frenzy of one of their own medicine-men; they were *not* influenced by implacable white gods, who relaxed only to drive hard bargains and exchange mildewed flour and shoddy blankets for their fish and furs. I am afraid they regarded these raids of Christian civilization as they looked upon grasshopper plagues, famines, inundations, and epidemics; while an utterly impassive God washed his hands of the means he had employed, and even encouraged the faithful to resist and overcome his emissaries—the white devils! Had Elijah Martin been a student of theology, he would have been struck with the singular resem-

blance of these theories—although the application thereof was reversed—to the Christian faith. But Elijah Martin had neither the imagination of a theologian nor the insight of a politician. He only saw that he, hitherto ignored and despised in a community of half-barbaric men, now translated to a community of men wholly savage, was respected and worshipped!

It might have turned a stronger head than Elijah's. He was at first frightened, fearful lest his reception concealed some hidden irony, or that, like the flower-crowned victim of ancient sacrifice, he was exalted and sustained to give importance and majesty to some impending martyrdom. Then he began to dread that his innocent deceit—if deceit it was—should be discovered; at last, partly from meekness and partly from the animal contentment of present security, he accepted the situation. Fortunately for him it was purely passive. The Great Chief of the

Minyo tribe was simply an expressionless idol of flesh and blood. The previous incumbent of that office had been an old man, impotent and senseless of late years through age and disease. The chieftains and braves had consulted in council before him, and perfunctorily submitted their decisions, like offerings, to his unresponsive shrine. In the same way, all material events—expeditions, trophies, industries—were supposed to pass before the dull, impassive eyes of the great chief, for direct acceptance. On the second day of Elijah's accession, two of the braves brought a bleeding human scalp before him. Elijah turned pale, trembled, and averted his head, and then, remembering the danger of giving way to his weakness, grew still more ghastly. The warriors watched him with impassioned faces. A grunt—but whether of astonishment, dissent, or approval, he could not tell—went round the circle. But the scalp was taken away

and never again appeared in his presence.

An incident still more alarming quickly followed. Two captives, white men, securely bound, were one day brought before him on their way to the stake, followed by a crowd of old and young squaws and children. The unhappy Elijah recognized in the prisoners two packers from a distant settlement who sometimes passed through Redwood Camp. An agony of terror, shame, and remorse shook the pseudo-chief to his crest of high feathers, and blanched his face beneath its paint and yellow ochre. To interfere to save them from the torture they were evidently to receive at the hands of those squaws and children, according to custom, would be exposure and death to him as well as themselves; while to assist by his passive presence at the horrible sacrifice of his countrymen was too much for even his weak selfishness. Scarcely knowing what he did as the lugubrious

procession passed before him, he hurriedly hid his face in his blanket and turned his back upon the scene. There was a dead silence. The warriors were evidently unprepared for this extraordinary conduct of their chief. What might have been their action it was impossible to conjecture, for at that moment a little squaw, perhaps impatient for the sport and partly emboldened by the fact that she had been selected, only a few days before, as the betrothed of the new chief, approached him slyly from the other side. The horrified eyes of Elijah, momentarily raised from his blanket, saw and recognized her. The feebleness of a weak nature, that dared not measure itself directly with the real cause, vented its rage on a secondary object. He darted a quick glance of indignation and hatred at the young girl. She ran back in startled terror to her companions, a hurried consultation followed, and in another moment the whole bevy of girls, old

women, and children were on the wing, shrieking and crying, to their wigwams.

"You see," said one of the prisoners coolly to the other in English, "I was right. They never intended to do anything to us. It was only a bluff. These Minyos are a different sort from the other tribes. They never kill anybody if they can help it."

"You're wrong," said the other excitedly. "It was that big chief there, with his head in a blanket, that sent those dogs to the rightabout. Hell! did you see them run at just a look from him? He's a high and mighty feller, you bet. Look at his dignity!"

"That's so—he ain't no slouch," said the other, gazing at Elijah's muffled head critically. "D——d if he ain't a born king."

The sudden conflict and utter revulsion of emotion that those simple words caused in Elijah's breast was almost incredible.

He had been at first astounded by the revelation of the peaceful reputation of the unknown tribe he had been called upon to govern; but even this comforting assurance was as nothing compared to the greater revelations implied in the speaker's praise of himself. He, Elijah Martin! the despised, the rejected, the worthless outcast of Redwood Camp, recognized as a "born king," a leader; his power felt by the very men who had scorned him! And he had done nothing—stop! had he actually done *nothing?* Was it not possible that he was *really* what they thought him? His brain reeled under the strong, unaccustomed wine of praise; acting upon his weak selfishness, it exalted him for a moment to their measure of his strength, even as their former belief in his inefficiency had kept him down. Courage is too often only the memory of past success. This was his first effort; he forgot he had not earned it, even as he now

ignored the danger of earning it. The few words of unconscious praise had fallen like the blade of knighthood on his cowering shoulders; he had risen ennobled from the contact. Though his face was still muffled in his blanket, he stood erect and seemed to have gained in stature.

The braves had remained standing irresolute, and yet watchful, a few paces from their captives. Suddenly Elijah, still keeping his back to the prisoners, turned upon the braves with blazing eyes, violently throwing out his hands with the gesture of breaking bonds. Like all sudden demonstrations of undemonstrative men, it was extravagant, weird, and theatrical. But it was more potent than speech—the speech that, even if effective, would still have betrayed him to his countrymen. The braves hurriedly cut the thongs of the prisoners; another impulsive gesture from Elijah, and they, too, fled. When he lifted his eyes cautiously from his blanket, captors

and captives had dispersed in opposite directions, and he was alone—and triumphant!

From that moment Elijah Martin was another man. He went to bed that night in an intoxicating dream of power; he arose a man of will, of strength. He read it in the eyes of the braves, albeit at times averted in wonder. He understood now, that although peace had been their habit and custom, they had nevertheless sought to test his theories of administration with the offering of the scalps and the captives, and in this detection of their common weakness he forgot his own. Most heroes require the contrast of the unheroic to set them off; and Elijah actually found himself devising means for strengthening the defensive and offensive character of the tribe, and was himself strengthened by it. Meanwhile the escaped packers did not fail to heighten the importance of their adventure by elevating the character and achievements of their deliverer; and it was pre-

sently announced throughout the frontier settlements that the hitherto insignificant and peaceful tribe of Minyos, who inhabited a large territory bordering on the Pacific Ocean, had developed into a powerful nation, only kept from the war-path by a more powerful but mysterious chief. The Government sent an Indian agent to treat with them, in its usual half-paternal, half-aggressive, and wholly inconsistent policy. Elijah, who still retained the imitative sense and adaptability to surroundings which belong to most lazy, impressible natures, and in striped yellow and vermilion features looked the chief he personated, met the agent with silent and becoming gravity. The council was carried on by signs. Never before had an Indian treaty been entered into with such perfect knowledge of the intentions and designs of the whites by the Indians, and such profound ignorance of the qualities of the Indians by the whites. It need scarcely be said that

the treaty was an unquestionable Indian success. They did not give up their arable lands; what they did sell to the agent they refused to exchange for extravagant-priced shoddy blankets, worthless guns, damp powder, and mouldy meal. They took pay in dollars, and were thus enabled to open more profitable commerce with the traders at the settlements for better goods and better bargains; they simply declined beads, whisky, and Bibles at any price. The result was that the traders found it profitable to protect them from their countrymen, and the chances of wantonly shooting down a possible valuable customer stopped the old indiscriminate rifle-practice. The Indians were allowed to cultivate their fields in peace. Elijah purchased for them a few agricultural implements. The catching, curing, and smoking of salmon became an important branch of trade. They waxed prosperous and rich; they lost their nomadic habits—a centralized settlement

bearing the external signs of an Indian village took the place of their old temporary encampments, but the huts were internally an improvement on the old wigwams. The dried fish were banished from the tent-poles to long sheds especially constructed for that purpose. The sweat-house was no longer utilized for worldly purposes. The wise and mighty Elijah did not attempt to reform their religion, but to preserve it in its integrity.

That these improvements and changes were due to the influence of one man was undoubtedly true, but that he was necessarily a superior man did not follow. Elijah's success was due partly to the fact that he had been enabled to impress certain negative virtues, which were part of his own nature, upon a community equally constituted to receive them. Each was strengthened by the recognition in each other of the unexpected value of those qualities; each acquired a confidence begotten of their

success. "*He-hides-his-face*," as Elijah Martin was known to the tribe after the episode of the released captives, was really not so much of an autocrat as many constitutional rulers.

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Two years of tranquil prosperity passed Elijah Martin, foundling, outcast, without civilized ties or relationship of any kind forgotten by his countrymen, and lifted into alien power, wealth, security, and respect became—home-sick!

It was near the close of a summer afternoon. He was sitting at the door of his lodge, which overlooked, on one side, the far-shining levels of the Pacific, and, on the other, the slow descent to the cultivated meadows and banks of the Minyo River, that debouched through a waste of salt-marsh, beach-grass, sand-dunes, and foamy estuary into the ocean. The headland, or promontory—the only eminence of the Minyo territory—had been reserved by him

for his lodge, partly on account of its isolation from the village at its base, and partly for the view it commanded of his territory. Yet his wearying and discontented eyes were more often found on the ocean, as a possible highway of escape from his irksome position, than on the plain and the distant range of mountains, so closely connected with the nearer past and his former detractors. In his vague longing he had no desire to return to them, even in triumph; in his present security there still lingered a doubt of his ability to cope with the old conditions. It was more like his easy, indolent nature—which revived in his prosperity—to trust to this least practical and remote solution of his trouble. His homesickness was as vague as his plan for escape from it; he did not know exactly what he regretted, but it was probably some life he had not enjoyed, some pleasure that had escaped his former incompetency and poverty.

He had sat thus a hundred times, as aimlessly blinking at the vast possibilities of the shining sea beyond, turning his back upon the nearer and more practicable mountains, lulled by the far-off beating of monotonous rollers, the lonely cry of the curlew and plover, the drowsy changes of alternate breaths of cool, fragrant reeds and warm, spicy sands that blew across his eyelids, and succumbed to sleep, as he had done a hundred times before. The narrow strips of coloured cloth, insignia of his dignity, flapped lazily from his tent-poles, and at last seemed to slumber with him; the shadows of the leaf-tracery thrown by the bay-tree on the ground at his feet scarcely changed its pattern. Nothing moved but the round, restless, berry-like eyes of Wachita, his child-wife, the former heroine of the incident with the captive packers, who sat near her lord, armed with a willow wand, watchful of intruding wasps, sand-flies, and even the more ostentatious

advances of a rotund and clerical-looking humble-bee, with his monotonous homily. Content, dumb, submissive, vacant, at such times, Wachita, debarred her husband's confidences through the native customs and his own indifferent taciturnity, satisfied herself by gazing at him with the wondering but ineffectual sympathy of a faithful dog. Unfortunately for Elijah her purely mechanical ministration could not prevent a more dangerous intrusion upon his security.

He awoke with a light start, and eyes that gradually fixed upon the woman a look of returning consciousness. Wachita pointed timidly to the village below.

"The Messenger of the Great White Father has come to-day, with his waggons and horses; he would see the chief of the Minyos, but I would not disturb my lord."

Elijah's brow contracted. Relieved of its characteristic metaphor, he knew that this meant that the new Indian agent had made his usual official visit, and had ex-

hibited the usual anxiety to see the famous chieftain.

"Good!" he said. "White Rabbit (his lieutenant) will see the messenger and exchange gifts. It is enough."

"The white messenger has brought his wangee (white) woman with him. They would look upon the face of him who hides it," continued Wachita dubiously. "They would that Wachita should bring them nearer to where my lord is, that they might see him when he knew it not."

Elijah glanced moodily at his wife, with the half suspicion with which he still regarded her alien character. "Then let Wachita go back to the squaws and old women, and let her hide herself with them until the wangee strangers are gone," he said curtly. "I have spoken. Go!"

Accustomed to these abrupt dismissals, which did not necessarily indicate displeasure, Wachita disappeared without a word. Elijah, who had risen, remained for

a few moments leaning against the tent-poles, gazing abstractedly toward the sea. The bees droned uninterruptedly in his ears, the far-off roll of the breakers came to him distinctly; but suddenly, with greater distinctness, came the murmur of a woman's voice.

"He don't look savage a bit! Why, he's real handsome."

"Hush! you——" said a second voice, in a frightened whisper.

"But if he *did* hear he couldn't understand," returned the first voice. A suppressed giggle followed.

Luckily, Elijah's natural and acquired habits of repression suited the emergency. He did not move, although he felt the quick blood fly to his face, and the voice of the first speaker had suffused him with a strange and delicious anticipation. He restrained himself, though the words she had naïvely dropped were filling him with new and tremulous suggestion. He was motionless,

even while he felt that the vague longing and yearning which had possessed him hitherto was now mysteriously taking some unknown form and action.

The murmuring ceased. The humble-bee's drone again became ascendant—a sudden fear seized him. She was *going;* he should never see her! While he had stood there a dolt and sluggard, she had satisfied her curiosity and stolen away. With a sudden yielding to impulse, he darted quickly in the direction where he had heard her voice. The thicket moved, parted, crackled, and rustled, and then undulated thirty feet before him in a long wave, as if from the passage of some lithe, invisible figure. But at the same moment a little cry, half of alarm, half of laughter, broke from his very feet, and a bent manzanito-bush, relaxed by frightened fingers, flew back against his breast. Thrusting it hurriedly aside, his stooping, eager face came almost in contact with the pink,

flushed cheeks and tangled curls of a woman's head. He was so near, her moist and laughing eyes almost drowned his eager glance; her parted lips and white teeth were so close to his that her quick breath took away his own.

She had dropped on one knee, as her companion fled, expecting he would overlook her as he passed, but his direct onset had extracted the feminine outcry. Yet even then she did not seem greatly frightened.

"It's only a joke, sir," she said, ignoring her late belief that he knew no English, but coolly lifting herself to her feet, by grasping his arm. "I'm Mrs. Dall, the Indian agent's wife. They said you wouldn't let anybody see you—and *I* determined I would. That's all!" She stopped, threw back her tangled curls behind her ears, shook the briars and thorns from her skirt, and added: "Well, I reckon you aren't afraid of a woman, are you? So no harm's done. Good-by!"

She drew slightly back as if to retreat, but the elasticity of the manzanito against which she was leaning threw her forward once more. He again inhaled the perfume of her hair; he saw even the tiny freckles that darkened her upper lip and brought out the moist, red curve below. A sudden recollection of a playmate of his vagabond childhood flashed across his mind; a wild inspiration of lawlessness, begotten of his past experience, his solitude, his dictatorial power, and the beauty of the woman before him, mounted to his brain. He threw his arms passionately around her, pressed his lips to hers, and with a half-hysterical laugh drew back and disappeared in the thicket.

Mrs. Dall remained for an instant dazed and stupefied. Then she lifted her arm mechanically, and with her sleeve wiped her bruised mouth and the ochre stain that his paint had left, like blood, upon her cheek. Her laughing face had become instantly

grave, but not from fear; her dark eyes had clouded, but not entirely with indignation. She suddenly brought down her hand sharply against her side with a gesture of discovery. "That's no Injun!" she said, with prompt decision. The next minute she plunged back into the trail again, and the dense foliage once more closed around her. But as she did so the broad, vacant face and the mutely wondering eyes of Wachita rose, like a placid moon, between the branches of a tree where she had been hidden, and shone serenely and impassively after her.

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A month elapsed. But it was a month filled with more experience to Elijah than his past two years of exaltation. In the first few days following his meeting with Mrs. Dall, he was possessed by terror, mingled with flashes of desperation, at the remembrance of his rash imprudence. His recollection of extravagant frontier chivalry

to womankind, and the swift retribution of the insulted husband or guardian, alternately filled him with abject fear or extravagant recklessness. At times prepared for flight, even to the desperate abandonment of himself in a canoe to the waters of the Pacific; at times he was on the point of inciting his braves to attack the Indian agency and precipitate the war that he felt would be inevitable. As the days passed, and there seemed to be no interruption to his friendly relations with the agency, with that relief a new, subtle joy crept into Elijah's heart. The image of the agent's wife framed in the leafy screen behind his lodge, the perfume of her hair and breath mingled with the spicing of the bay, the brief thrill and tantalization of the stolen kiss still haunted him. Through his long, shy abstention from society, and his two years of solitary exile, the fresh beauty of this young Western wife, in whom the frank artlessness of girlhood still lingered,

appeared to him like a superior creation. He forgot his vague longings in the inception of a more tangible but equally unpractical passion. He remembered her unconscious and spontaneous admiration of him; he dared to connect it with her forgiving silence. If she had withheld her confidences from her husband, he could hope—he knew not exactly what!

One afternoon Wachita put into his hand a folded note. With an instinctive presentiment of its contents, Elijah turned red and embarrassed in receiving it from the woman who was recognized as his wife. But the impassive, submissive manner of this household drudge, instead of touching his conscience, seemed to him a vulgar and brutal acceptance of the situation that dulled whatever compunction he might have had. He opened the note and read hurriedly as follows:—

"You took a great freedom with me

the other day, and I am justified in taking one with you now. I believe you understand English as well as I do. If you want to explain that, and your conduct to me, I will be at the same place this afternoon. My friend will accompany me, but she need not hear what you have to say."

Elijah read the letter, which might have been written by an ordinary school-girl, as if it had conveyed the veiled rendezvous of a princess. The reserve, caution, and shyness which had been the safeguard of his weak nature were swamped in a flow of immature passion. He flew to the interview with the eagerness and inexperience of first love. He was completely at her mercy. So utterly was he subjugated by her presence that she did not even run the risk of his passion. Whatever sentiment might have mingled with her curiosity, she was never conscious of a necessity to guard

herself against it. At this second meeting she was in full possession of his secret. He had told her everything; she had promised nothing in return—she had not even accepted anything. Even her actual after-relations to the *dénouement* of his passion are still shrouded in mystery.

Nevertheless, Elijah lived two weeks on the unsubstantial memory of this meeting. What might have followed could not be known, for at the end of that time an outrage—so atrocious that even the peaceful Minyos were thrilled with savage indignation—was committed on the outskirts of the village. An old chief, who had been specially selected to deal with the Indian agent, and who kept a small trading outpost, had been killed and his goods despoiled by a reckless Redwood packer. The murderer had coolly said that he was only "serving out" the tool of a fraudulent imposture on the Government, and

that he dared the arch-impostor himself, the so-called Minyo chief, to help himself. A wave of ungovernable fury surged up to the very tent-poles of Elijah's lodge and demanded vengeance. Elijah trembled and hesitated. In the thraldom of his selfish passion for Mrs. Dall he dared not contemplate a collision with her countrymen. He would have again sought refuge in his passive, non-committal attitude, but he knew the impersonal character of Indian retribution and compensation—a sacrifice of equal value, without reference to the culpability of the victim—and he dreaded some spontaneous outbreak. To prevent the enforced expiation of the crime by some innocent brother packer, he was obliged to give orders for the pursuit and arrest of the criminal, secretly hoping for his escape or the interposition of some circumstance to avert his punishment. A day of sullen expectancy to the old men and squaws in camp, of gloomy anxiety to

Elijah alone in his lodge, followed the departure of the braves on the war-path. It was midnight when they returned. Elijah, who from his habitual reserve and the accepted etiquette of his exalted station had remained impassive in his tent, only knew from the guttural rejoicings of the squaws that the expedition had been successful and the captive was in their hands. At any other time he might have thought it an evidence of some growing scepticism of his infallibility of judgment and a diminution of respect that they did not confront him with their prisoner. But he was too glad to escape from the danger of exposure and possible arraignment of his past life by the desperate captive, even though it might not have been understood by the spectators. He reflected that the omission might have arisen from their recollection of his previous aversion to a retaliation on other prisoners. Enough that they would wait his signal for the

torture and execution at sunrise the next day.

The night passed slowly. It is more than probable that the selfish and ignoble torments of the sleepless and vacillating judge were greater than those of the prisoner who dozed at the stake between his curses. Yet it was part of Elijah's fatal weakness that his kinder and more human instincts were dominated even at that moment by his lawless passion for the Indian agent's wife, and his indecision as to the fate of his captive was equally due to his preoccupation and a selfish consideration of her possible relations to the result. He hated the prisoner for his infelicitous and untimely crime, yet he could not make up his mind to his death. He paced the ground before his lodge in dishonourable incertitude. The small eyes of the submissive Wachita watched him with vague solicitude.

Towards morning he was struck by a

shameful inspiration. He would creep unperceived to the victim's side, unloose his bonds, and bid him fly to the Indian agency! There he was to inform Mrs. Dall that her husband's safety depended upon his absenting himself for a few days, but that she was to remain and communicate with Elijah. She would understand everything, perhaps; at least she would know that the prisoner's release was to please her, and even if she did not, no harm would be done, a white man's life would be saved, and his real motive would not be suspected. He turned with feverish eagerness to the lodge. Wachita had disappeared—probably to join the other women. It was well; she would not suspect him.

The tree to which the doomed man was bound was, by custom, selected nearest the chief's lodge, within its sacred enclosure, with no other protection than that offered by its reserved seclusion and the outer

semicircle of warriors' tents before it. To escape, the captive would therefore have to pass beside the chief's lodge to the rear and descend the hill towards the shore. Elijah would show him the way, and make it appear as if he had escaped unaided. As he glided into the shadow of a group of pines, he could dimly discern the outline of the destined victim, secured against one of the larger trees in a sitting posture, with his head fallen forward on his breast as if in sleep. But at the same moment another figure glided out from the shadow and approached the fatal tree. It was Wachita!

He stopped in amazement. But in another instant a flash of intelligence made it clear to him. He remembered her vague uneasiness and solicitude at his agitation and her sudden disappearance; she had fathomed his perplexity, as she had once before! Of her own accord she was going to release the prisoner! The knife to cut

his cords glittered in her hand. Brave and faithful animal!

He held his breath as he drew nearer. But, to his horror, the knife suddenly flashed in the air and darted down, again and again, upon the body of the helpless man. There was a convulsive struggle, but no outcry, and the next moment the body hung limp and inert in its cords. Elijah would himself have fallen, half fainting, against a tree, but by a revulsion of feeling, came the quick revelation that the desperate girl had rightly solved the problem! She had done what *he* ought to have done—and his loyalty and manhood were preserved. That conviction and the courage to act upon it—to have called the sleeping braves to witness his sacrifice—would have saved him, but—it was ordered otherwise!

As the girl rapidly passed him he threw out his hand and seized her wrist. "What did you do this for?" he demanded.

"For you," she said stupidly.

"And why?"

"Because you no kill him—you love his squaw."

"*His* squaw!" He staggered back. A terrible suspicion flashed upon him. He dashed Wachita aside and ran to the tree. It was the body of the Indian agent!

Aboriginal justice had been satisfied. The warriors had not caught the *murderer*, but, true to their idea of vicarious retribution, they had determined upon the expiatory sacrifice of a life as valuable and innocent as the one they had lost, and had carried off the unfortunate representative of the Government.

"So the Gov'rment hev at last woke up and wiped out them cussed Digger Minyos," said Snap-shot Harry, three months later, as he laid down the newspaper, in the brand-new saloon of the brand-new town of Redwood. "I see

they've stampeded both banks of the Minyo River, and sent off a lot to the reservation. I reckon the soldiers at Fort Cass got sick o' sentiment after those hounds killed the Ingun agent, and are beginning to agree with us that the only 'good Injun' is a dead one."

"And it turns out that that wonderful chief, that them two packers used to rave about, woz about as big a devil ez any, and tried to run off with the agent's wife, only the warriors killed her. I'd like to know what become of him. Some says he was killed, others allow that he got away. I've heerd tell that he was originally some kind of Methodist preacher!—a kind o' saint that got a sort o' spiritooal holt on the old squaws and children."

"Why don't you ask old Skeesicks? I see he's back here ag'in—and grubbin' along at a dollar a day on tailin's. He's been somewhere up north, they say."

"What, Skeesicks? That shiftless,

o'n'ry cuss! You bet he wusn't anywhere wheré there was danger or fighting. Why, you might as well hev suspected *him* of being the big chief himself! There he comes—ask him."

And the laughter was so general that Elijah Martin—*alias* Skeesicks—lounging shyly into the bar-room, joined in it weakly.

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